

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5275

As Passed Senate, March 9, 1995

Title: An act relating to consolidation of cities and towns.

Brief Description: Affecting the consolidation of cities and towns.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, McCaslin and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 2/9/95, 2/14/95 [DP].
Passed Senate, 3/9/95, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Drew, Hale, Heavey, McCaslin and Winsley.

Staff: Rod McAulay (786-7754)

Background: A proposal for the consolidation of adjoining cities and towns must be initiated either by resolution of the legislative body of each of the cities and towns or by petition. The question of consolidation must be submitted and approved by the voters of each city and town involved. In addition to voting on the question of consolidation, the voters may also be asked to vote on the assumption of indebtedness and on the form or plan of government.

It is prescribed that the question of the assumption of indebtedness by a city in which the indebtedness did not originate shall be placed on the ballot as a separate proposition with the words: "For Assumption of Indebtedness" and "Against Assumption of Indebtedness." The proposition does not authorize a levy if it receives a favorable vote.

There are no provisions authorizing the selection of a name of the consolidated municipality.

The option of providing for electing officials from wards is not addressed.

Not more than two square miles in area shall be included within the corporate limits of a town having a population of 1,500 or less, or located in a county with a population of one million or more. Not more than three square miles in area shall be included within the corporate limits of a town having a population of more than 1,500 in a county with a population of less than one million.

Summary of Bill: If the assumption of indebtedness is to be voted on in a city consolidation election, the question on the ballot must state: "For Assumption of Indebtedness to be paid by the levy of annual property taxes in excess of regular property taxes" and "Against

Assumption of Indebtedness to be paid by the levy of annual property taxes in excess of regular property taxes." Approval of the proposition authorizes annual property taxes to be levied on the property within the city in which the indebtedness did not originate.

The joint resolution or petition initiating the consolidation of cities and towns may prescribe the name of the consolidated city or provide that a ballot proposition be submitted. Proposed names are separately stated on the ballot providing the voter with the option to select one. The county canvassing board for each county in which the proposed consolidated city is located must report the number of votes cast in their county for each optional name. The name receiving the greatest combined number of votes becomes the name of the consolidated city. In the event of a tie vote, the name is chosen by lot drawn by the mayor of the largest city at a public meeting.

The joint resolution or petition initiating the consolidation process may prescribe that officials of the consolidated city be elected from wards, except when a commission form of government is prescribed. Wards are drawn so that they are of nearly equal population, and so that the boundaries of the former cities and towns that are consolidated be given maximum effect, in order to minimize the fractionating and dilution of the vote of any one former city or town between the new wards.

The square mileage limitations on the size of towns does not apply to a town located in three or more counties.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: It will facilitate consolidation of cities and towns and make the process less costly.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Stan Finkelstein, AWC.

House Amendment(s): The House amendment clarifies the method of calculating the number of registered petition signatures to initiate a consolidation.