

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2011

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to authorizing school levies for periods not exceeding four years.

Brief Description: Authorizing school levies for periods not exceeding four years.

Sponsors: Representatives Wensman, Cole, H. Sommers, Talcott, B. Thomas, Regala, Constantine, Ballasiotes, Radcliff, D. Schmidt, Carlson, Clements, Dyer, Bush, Johnson, Cairnes, Quall, Morris, Keiser, Linville, Veloria, L. Thomas, Backlund, Cooke, Kenney, Poulsen, Hatfield, Dickerson, Ogden, Kessler, Blalock, Tokuda, Conway, Costa and Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/3/97, 3/4/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Staff: Joe Hauth (786-7111).

Background: The Washington State Constitution specifies that propositions to levy additional taxes for school operating purposes be limited to a period of two years. For a district operating levy to continue, it must be reauthorized by the voters every two years.

Article VII, Section 2 of the constitution requires the Legislature to affirm this taxing authority in statute.

Local school boards submit levies for initial voter consideration at either a state primary, state general election, or on other election dates as provided by law. Levies may be for a single year or for two years. If the voters do not pass the first levy request, the levy may be submitted a second time.

Summary of Bill: State laws that limit the allowable time period for a school operating levy are modified. Propositions to levy additional taxes for school operating purposes may be for a period of up to four years.

The act takes effect provided that the people of Washington State approve an accompanying constitutional amendment at the next general election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Changing the levy period will allow a school district to plan for a longer period of time. There were relatively fewer students when the levy law was originally adopted; today there are almost one million students. The provision merely gives the school districts a longer operating period. Extending the levy period will provide stability to local funding. Reducing the frequency of levies will provide savings, and school districts may decide whether to have two-year or four-year levies. This is strictly a school district option, and is only for maintenance and operations. It is hard to estimate funding needs over a longer period of time, but it is a good policy. Support for this provision is urged because it will provide continued support in the classroom. The levy provisions will move school districts away from a recurring two-year uncertainty cycle. Many school districts will take advantage of an opportunity for longer levies.

Testimony Against: We have a problem with levies and we don't want to wait three years before they improve the community. Saving money by reducing the number of levies is not a savings if it does not improve education.

Testified: Representative Wensman, prime sponsor; Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (pro); Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators (pro); Lloyd Gardner, citizen (con); Bob Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (pro); and Karen Davis, Washington Education Association.