

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1154

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Ways & Means, April 1, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to eliminating the time limit on regular tax levies for medical care and services.

**Brief Description:** Eliminating the time limit on regular tax levies for medical care and services.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Cooper, Delvin, Edmonds, Conway, Wood, Dunshee, Gombosky, Doumit, Hatfield, Kenney and Cody.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 3/30/99, 4/1/99 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Bauer, Vice Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Fairley, Fraser, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau, Wojahn and Zarelli.

**Staff:** Terry Wilson (786-7433)

**Background:** All real and personal property in this state is subject to the property tax each year based on its value unless a specific exemption is provided by law.

The state Constitution limits the aggregate property tax that can be levied without a vote of the people to a maximum of 1 percent of the true and fair value of the property (or \$10.00 per \$1,000 of value). Levies in excess of the 1 percent limit require voter approval and are termed excess-levies. Excess levies must obtain a 60 percent majority vote plus meet a minimum voter turnout requirement.

Taxes imposed under the 1 percent limit are called "regular" levies. Voter approval is not required to levy these taxes. However, some regular levies are limited in duration and require voter approval. For example, emergency medical service levies, park and recreation district levies, and affordable housing levies are regular levies that must have voter approval.

The time limits and voting requirements for these levies are:

Emergency Medical Services Levies:

Time limit: six years.

Voting requirement: When the voter turnout exceeds 40 percent of voter turnout at last general election - 60 percent "yes" vote; when the voter turnout is less than 40 percent - the "yes" votes must exceed 24 percent of the votes in the last general election.

**Park and Recreation District Levies:**

Time limit: six years.

Voting requirement: When the voter turnout exceeds 40 percent of voter turnout at last general election - 60 percent "yes" vote; when the voter turnout is less than 40 percent - the "yes" votes must exceed 24 percent of the votes in the last general election.

**Affordable Housing Levies:**

Time limit: 10 years.

Voting requirement: Simple majority.

**Summary of Bill:** The six-year time limit on property taxes for emergency medical purposes is eliminated. This change is effective for taxes approved by voters in the future.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** In 1969 Seattle started the first paramedic program. The first EMS levy was in 1979. They must pass every six years. This bill allows the districts to ask for a permanent levy which would be on par with police levies. The voters do not realize they have to reauthorize these levies every six years but sometimes think the request is an increase. EMS is a vital service which needs stability in funding. If an election is lost, it is difficult to provide the services. This will offset the cost of the elections. It doesn't change the initial voter requirement.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Representative O'Brien, prime sponsor; Ron Rosenblum, AWC; Jim Broman, Lacey Fire District 3.