
Local Government Committee

HB 1594

Brief Description: Clarifying the role of a chief financial officer in a charter county.

Sponsors: Senator Berkey, Representatives Haigh, Dunshee, Romero, Mielke, Benson, Ahern, Moeller, Wood, Alexander, Hinkle and Sullivan.

Brief Summary of Bill

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarifies that certain statutory references to a "chief financial officer" apply only to designated officials within charter counties. |
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Hearing Date: 1/15/04

Staff: Thamas Osborn (786-7129).

Background:

The State Constitution allows for two forms of county government in this state: 1) the commission form and 2) the "home rule" charter form. The constitution requires that all non-charter counties be governed by a board of county commissioners. A board of county commissioners shares administrative and some legislative functions with other independently elected county officials, including an auditor, clerk, treasurer, sheriff, assessor, and coroner. Other independently elected county officials and court officers include the county prosecuting attorney and the judges of the Superior Court.

Article XI, Section 4 of the State Constitution was amended in 1948 to allow a county to adopt a "home rule" charter that frees a county from the constraints of the commission form and allows the voters to create their own form of county government, though subject to specified constitutional requirements. Within the limits prescribed by the constitution, counties that adopt charters may *appoint* officers to perform the various governmental functions that are performed by *elected* officials in those counties that retain the commission form. Furthermore, a charter county is free to create titles and prescribe duties for county officers that are different from those required of counties that follow the commission form. Five counties have adopted home rule charters: Clallam, King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Whatcom.

In many charter counties, the duties traditionally associated with the county auditor are performed by an official designated as the "chief financial officer". In order to accommodate this difference in the titles used by the two types of counties, several state statutes relating to the powers and responsibilities of a county auditor refer to the "county auditor *or* the chief financial officer".

Summary of Bill:

Statutes relating to various duties of the county auditor are amended to clarify that the title "chief financial officer" refers only to the chief financial officer of a charter county.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.