

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3019

As Passed House:
February 8, 2006

Title: An act relating to chief financial officers in charter counties.

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

Sponsors: By Representatives Haigh, Alexander, Dunshee and B. Sullivan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/30/06 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/8/06, 97-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the role of the county auditor or financial officer to specify that the county auditor or financial officer must be designated within a charter county.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Simpson, Chair; Clibborn, Vice Chair; Schindler, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; B. Sullivan, Takko and Woods.

Staff: Kasa Tupua (786-7291).

Background:

The Washington Constitution (Constitution) allows for two forms of county government in this state: the commission form; and 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.

Article XI, Section 4 of the Constitution was amended in 1948 to allow a county to adopt a "home rule" charter that allows the voters to create their own form of county government, subject to certain 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.

For the purposes of accounting and reporting on municipal corporations, each county auditor or chief financial officer is an ex officio deputy of the State Auditor. For the purposes of the ex officio duties, county auditors or chief financial officers are under the direction of the State Auditor, and do not receive additional payment or compensation.

Summary of Bill:

The provision pertaining to the county auditor or chief financial officer as ex officio deputy state auditor is changed in two ways:

- the reference to "chief financial officer" is modified to refer to as "financial officer;" and
 - a county auditor or financial officer must be designated within a charter county.
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Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: It is important that the roles of county auditors and chief financial officers are made clear, and the language in the bill clarifies that for charter and non-charter counties, the county auditor is indeed the chief financial officer. Similar legislation was passed unanimously in 2003 and 2004, and the provisions in this bill reinforce the responsibilities of the county auditors and chief financial officers to ensure checks and balances within the system. The bill is further supported by county auditors, commissioners, and the state auditor.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Haigh, prime sponsor; Brian Sonntag, State Auditor; A. C. Brotche, Mason County Auditor; Karen Flynn, Washington State Association of County Auditors, Kitsap County Auditor; and Mike Garvison, Washington State Association of County Auditors, Skamania County Auditor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.