
Capital Budget Committee

HB 1352

Brief Description: Establishing the historic county courthouse grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Kessler, DeBolt, Lantz, B. Sullivan, Armstrong, Newhouse, Hinkle, Ormsby, Schindler, Kretz, Wood, Blake, Flannigan, Buck, McCoy, Williams and McDermott.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a competitive grant program for the protection and preservation of the state's historic county courthouses. Only courthouses that continue to be used for county functions and that meet the eligibility requirements for the Washington Heritage register are eligible to receive grants.
- Appropriates \$20 million from the State Building Construction Account to the Historic County Courthouse Account for the 2005-07 biennium.

Hearing Date: 2/16/05

Staff: Susan Howson (786-7142).

Background:

In 2003, the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) within the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) commissioned a study of the rehabilitation needs of the state's historic county courthouses. Of the 39 courthouses in the state, the study determined that 28 meet the criteria for consideration as historic buildings. Of these 28 courthouses, the study estimated \$93 million is needed to restore historic features and update structural and mechanical systems. All 28 courthouses are currently in use as active seats of county government.

Summary of Bill:

A historic county courthouse grant program is established for the protection and preservation of the state's historic county courthouses. The grant program is administered by the OAHP. Only courthouses that continue to be used for county functions and that meet the eligibility requirements for the Washington Heritage register are eligible to receive grants. Counties must provide equal matching funds from public or private sources.

The Historic County Courthouse Account is created in the state treasury. \$20 million is appropriated to the account for the biennium ending June 30, 2007 from the State

Building Construction Account. Moneys in the account may be spent only after legislative appropriation. Expenditures from the account must be used exclusively to fund the historic county courthouse grant program. No more than 1 percent may be used for administrative purposes.

An advisory board is established by the OAHP. The advisory board has 12 members if all three at-large members are appointed.

By October 1, 2005, DCTED must establish eligibility requirements and a grant application process. All rehabilitation work must comply with the federal Department of the Interior's standards for rehabilitation. Grants may not be used for courthouse maintenance. Any surplus in the account may be awarded to applications from historic county-owned facilities such as libraries, museums, and hospitals that meet grant criteria.

Appropriation: Twenty-million dollars is appropriated for the biennium ending June 30, 2007, from the state building construction account to the historic county courthouse account.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2005.