

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2357

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to school districts' use of state forest revenues.

Brief Description: Allowing a school district to transfer certain revenue into the district's capital projects account.

Sponsors: By Representatives McIntire and Fromhold.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Capital Budget: 3/1/07, 3/5/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/14/07, 96-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/13/07, 47-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes school districts to transfer distributions of state forest land revenues from their debt service funds to their capital projects funds, so long as those revenues have not been pledged for debt service on school district bonds.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 22 members: Representatives Fromhold, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Schual-Berke, Vice Chair; McDonald, Ranking Minority Member; Newhouse, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chase, Dunshee, Eickmeyer, Flannigan, Goodman, Hankins, Hasegawa, Kelley, McCune, Orcutt, Pearson, Pedersen, Sells, Skinner, Strow and Upthegrove.

Staff: Susan Howson (786-7142).

Background:

School districts are required to establish several funds, including a general fund, a debt service fund, and a capital projects fund. Districts may use each fund for particular purposes, subject

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to statutory restrictions. A school district may issue general obligation bonds that are payable from the district's tax revenues and from other moneys lawfully available and pledged for that purpose. Proceeds from a district's bond levies must be deposited in the district's debt service fund.

The state holds certain forest lands in trust for counties. Net revenues from these state forest lands are distributed to counties in the same manner as general taxes are paid and prorated during the year of payment. As junior taxing districts, school districts thus receive a portion of state forest land revenue distributions. The distribution of state forest lands revenue that a school district receives depends on the types of tax levies that the school district has passed. For example, if the district has passed a capital levy for construction or remodeling, a portion of the state forest lands revenue is deposited in the district's capital projects fund, where capital levy proceeds are deposited. If the district has passed a bond levy, a portion of the state forest lands revenue is deposited in the district's debt service fund, where district revenues dedicated to debt service on bond levies are deposited.

A 1998 informal opinion of the Attorney General's office advises that school districts do not have statutory authority to transfer state forest lands revenue distributed to their debt service funds into their capital projects funds. This is because the statute that distributes the forest land revenues to junior taxing districts operates as a dedication of that revenue to the respective local funds that receive tax revenues. For this reason, school districts may not spend distributions of state forest land revenues directly from their debt service funds for capital purposes.

Summary of Bill:

School districts are authorized to transfer distributions of state forest land revenues from their debt service funds to their capital projects funds, so long as those revenues have not been pledged for debt service on school district bonds.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The Senate amendment specifies that revenues generated from state forests may be transferred to the capital fund "to the extent not necessary" for debt repayment. The original bill as passed the House of Representatives specifies that revenues generated from state forests that "are not pledged" for debt repayment may be transferred to the capital fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill gives business managers and superintendents the flexibility to move forest land revenues from a school district's debt service fund to their capital projects fund as long as these funds are not dedicated to debt retirement on existing bonds.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Mitch Denning, Alliance of Educators Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.