

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5514

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to increasing the frequency of county legislative meetings at alternate locations.

Brief Description: Increasing the frequency of county legislative meetings at alternate locations.

Sponsors: Senators Dozier, Mullet, Short and Wilson, J..

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/16/22, 2/22/22 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended By Committee)

- Allows a county legislative authority to hold regular meetings once per calendar month in a city within the county that has a greater population than the county seat, and once per quarter at any other location within the county, provided than no more than one meeting is held at an alternative location in this way per month.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Pollet, Chair; Duerr, Vice Chair; Goehner, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Robertson and Senn.

Staff: Kellen Wright (786-7134).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In most counties in Washington, boards of commissioners act as the legislative and chief administrative authority for the county. These boards have at least three members, with counties that have more than 300,000 people allowed to increase the number of commissioners to five. In the seven counties that have adopted a home rule charter, county councils exercise the legislative authority within the county.

However denominated, the legislative authority of each county is required to hold regular meetings at the county seat to transact county business. The county seat is the primary location of county government, with various offices and functions required to be located in the county seat, and a regular meeting is a reoccurring meeting held in accordance with a schedule declared by statute or rule. The legislative authority may also hold a joint regular meeting with another county legislative authority at either of the county seats when the agenda is of mutual interest to the counties.

County legislative authorities are also allowed to hold a regular meeting outside of the county seat at another location in the county when the legislative authority determines that doing so will support greater citizen engagement with county government. This can occur no more than four times a year, and notice of the meeting must be provided at least 30 days prior to the meeting on the county's website, in a newspaper of general circulation, and to any county resident who has asked to receive notice by electronic mail.

Summary of Amended Bill:

If a county legislative authority determines that holding a meeting at an alternative location will support greater citizen engagement with county government, then the legislative authority may hold up to one regular meeting per calendar month in a city within the county that has a greater population than the county seat, and up to one regular meeting a quarter at another location within the county. No more than one meeting per calendar month may be held at an alternative location in this way.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amended bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- allows a county legislative authority to hold up to one regular meeting per month in a city within the county that has a greater population than the county seat, and up to one regular meeting a quarter at any other location within the county; and
- provides that no more than one meeting per month can be held at an alternate location.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Counties can use opportunities to hold meetings throughout smaller communities within the county to increase public participation, as holding meetings within a community can increase engagement and prevent residents from needing to travel across the county. This leads to better dialogue and reduces barriers to participation. This bill doesn't change the county seat, but allows counties the option to hold meetings in communities when county business is more relevant to that part of the county. In some counties, most of the population can be located away from the county seat.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Perry Dozier, prime sponsor; and Jerome Delvin, Benton County Commissioner.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.