

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2371

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Local Government*

Title: An act relating to conservation districts.

Brief Description: Modifying special assessment authority of conservation districts.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Kremen, Nealey, R. Johnson, Haugen, Rayburn, Rasmussen, Spanel, Grant and Braddock.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Local Government, January 22, 1992, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 15 members: Representatives Haugen, Chair; Cooper, Vice Chair; Ferguson, Ranking Minority Member; Mitchell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Edmondson; Franklin; Horn; Nealey; Nelson; Rayburn; Roland; Wood; Wynne; and Zellinsky.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7126).

Background: Conservation districts are special districts authorized to engage in a variety of resource conservation activities, including the conservation of soil and water.

The county legislative authority of the county in which a conservation district is located may impose a system of special assessments on land within the conservation district to finance the district's activities. The county must hold a public hearing on the proposed special assessments and must find that the public interest will be served and the special assessments will not exceed the special benefit the land receives or will receive from the activities of the conservation district before it can impose the assessments. The action of a county legislative authority only authorizes a system of special assessments to be imposed for a one-year period.

Special assessments are stated as either a uniform annual per acre amount or both a flat rate per parcel plus a uniform annual per acre amount. The maximum annual per acre

special assessment rate may not exceed 10 cents per acre and the maximum per parcel rate may not exceed \$5. However, the maximum per acre special assessment rate on forest lands benefiting from the activities of a conservation district is limited to one-tenth of the weighted average per acre assessment on all other lands that are subject to the special assessments.

Summary of Bill: The period of time over which a county legislative authority may impose special assessments for a conservation district is expanded from one year to up to 10 years. If the county authorizes a system of special assessments for more than one year, the actual special assessment that is imposed on a parcel of land may vary each year in accordance with the system of measuring the special assessments.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: It is too cumbersome and expensive to go through the entire process each year. Conservation districts are very popular. Conservation districts need a more stable source of funding to complete multi-year projects.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Ron Juris and Bas Scholter, Washington Association of Conservation Districts; Dan Coyne, Washington Dairy Federation; and Tom Casey, Washington State Grange.