

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2980

As Reported by House Committee On:
Trade & Economic Development

Title: An act relating to economic development of historic county courthouses.

Brief Description: Establishing the historic county courthouse grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Kessler, Lantz, Hinkle, McCoy, Newhouse, Veloria, Dunshee, O'Brien, Blake, Buck, Hatfield and Chase.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Trade & Economic Development: 2/3/04, 2/5/04 [DP].

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates the Historic County Courthouse Grant program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Veloria, Chair; Skinner, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chase, McCoy, Ormsby and Pettigrew.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Condotta, Kristiansen, Priest and Rodne.

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

Background:

The Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) in the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development administers the Washington Heritage Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The Washington Heritage Register includes districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American or Washington history, architecture, archaeology, and culture. The OAHP prepares comprehensive historic surveys and plans as well as research and evaluation of surveyed resources in preparation for nominations to the Washington Heritage Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Currently, there are 16 courthouses in Washington that are on both the Washington Heritage Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Summary of Bill:

The Historic County Courthouse Grant program is established for the protection and preservation of the state's historic county courthouses. The OAHP will administer the program. A county courthouse must meet the criteria for the Washington Heritage Register as well as additional eligibility criteria established by OAHP. The courthouse must continue to be used for county functions. The additional eligibility criteria and grant application process must be established by October 1, 2004.

Grants may be made for courthouse protection and preservation including character defining architectural features, general repairs, system upgrades, and improvements to access and accommodations for persons with disabilities. Grants may not be made for courthouse maintenance. All rehabilitation work must comply with the federal Department of Interior's standards for rehabilitation.

The OAHP must establish an advisory board. The board must include: two county elected officials appointed by the Washington Association of Counties; two county elected officials appointed by the Washington Association of County Officials; a representative of a statewide historic preservation organization; a representative from a county heritage commission that is a certified local government; a member of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate; a member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; a member of the state advisory council on historic preservation; and up to three at-large members with expertise in architecture, architectural history, construction, construction management, engineering, planning or a related field.

The Historic County Courthouse Account is created in the state treasury. Appropriations by the Legislature shall be deposited in the account and funds may only be spent after appropriation. Expenditures from the account shall be used exclusively to fund the Historic County Courthouse Grant program. No more than 1 percent of the expenditures from the account may be used for administrative purposes. If available funds in the account exceed eligible courthouse grant recipients, other historic county owned facilities, such as libraries, museums and hospitals, may apply for grants using the same criteria.

Appropriation: The sum of \$10,000,000 from the state building construction account for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2004.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2004.

Testimony For: Caring for historic buildings is important in all counties. Many of our courthouses were built before we understood how to engineer to sustain the earthquakes we experience here. Many of the courthouses are the centers of the city or town it is located in. The courthouses are important pieces of Washington's architectural history and many are in

need of significant rehabilitation or repair. Our local governments are unable to afford this work on their own as they struggle to provide their citizens with basic services. Many of the courthouses are in distressed rural counties. Rehabilitating and repairing these courthouses will not only create more jobs than constructing a new courthouse, but it will preserve an important piece of the community.

Testimony Against: No appropriation in the bill for the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to administer the program.

Persons Testifying: (In Support) Representative Kessler, prime sponsor; Dan Titterness, Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners; Paul Parker, Washington State Association of Counties; Ray Graves, private citizen; Herb Base, Mason County, and Michael Sullivan, Washington Trust.

(With Concerns) Tom McBride, Community, Trade and Economic Development.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.