

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2151

As Reported by House Committee On: Local Government

Title: An act relating to authorizing qualified electors to divide optional municipal code cities into wards.

Brief Description: Authorizing qualified electors to divide optional municipal code cities into wards.

Sponsors: Representatives Ormsby, P. Sullivan, B. Sullivan and Dunshee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/20/07, 2/26/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes qualified electors of a noncharter code city to divide the city into wards or to change the boundaries of existing wards.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Simpson, Chair; Eddy, Vice Chair; B. Sullivan and Takko.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Curtis, Ranking Minority Member; Schindler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member and Ross.

Staff: Jessica Nowakowski (786-7291) and Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Cities may be classified as code cities or non-code cities and towns. Code cities have broad statutory home rule authority in matters of local concern. Code cities and non-code cities and towns have separate statutory requirements for governance and operation.

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

Subject to statutory requirements, the council of a code city that has not adopted a charter for its governance may divide the city into wards or modify the boundaries of existing wards. Except as otherwise provided, changes in the boundaries of wards may not affect the term of any councilmember, and councilmembers must serve out their terms in the wards of their residences at the time of their elections. The representation of each ward in the city council must be in proportion to the population, as nearly as is practicable.

Only a resident of the ward may be a candidate for or hold office as a councilmember of the ward. Additionally, only voters of the ward may vote at a primary to nominate candidates for a councilmember of the ward. Except as provided otherwise, the voters of the entire city may vote at the general election to elect a councilmember of a ward.

Wards redrawn by a city council must be redrawn as provided in statutory redistricting provisions for counties, municipal corporations, and special purpose districts.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

At any time greater than three months before a municipal general election, the qualified electors of a noncharter code city located east of the crest of the Cascade mountain range that has an estimated population greater than 80,000 but less than 180,000 and is intersected by Interstate 90 may divide the city into wards or change the boundaries of existing wards. Under current law, this authority is reserved solely for the city council.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The type of noncharter code cities that may divide into wards or change the boundaries of existing wards is changed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill broadens the possibility for a code city to divide into wards and provides an additional opportunity for people to have a voice in their local government.

(With concerns) Procedurally, it is unclear how the division of wards by qualified electors of a code city would occur. Also, "qualified elector" is not defined in the bill. Division by wards is a deliberated process by a city council and should remain an authority of a city council.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Ormsby, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Victoria Lincoln, Association of Washington Cities.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.