

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2627

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, February 26, 2018

Title: An act relating to authorizations of proposals for emergency medical care and service levies.

Brief Description: Concerning authorizations of proposals for emergency medical care and service levies.

Sponsors: House Committee on Finance (originally sponsored by Representatives Springer and Stokesbary).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/18, 63-34.

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/24/18, 2/26/18 [DPA(WM), DNP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Permits taxing districts to continue an existing emergency medical services (EMS) levy with simple majority ballot approval, regardless of whether the tax rate changes.
- Changes the large-city approval requirement for countywide EMS levies from 100 percent to 75 percent.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Rolfes, Chair; Frockt, Vice Chair; Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Hunt, Keiser, Mullet, Palumbo, Pedersen, Ranker and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Honeyford, Assistant Ranking Member; Bailey, Brown, Schoesler, Wagoner and Warnick.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Braun, Ranking Member; Becker, Fain and Hasegawa.

Staff: Jeffrey Mitchell (786-7438)

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.

Background: An EMS levy is a regular voter-approved property tax levy used to provide emergency medical care or services. An EMS levy may be authorized for six years, ten years, or permanently. An EMS levy must be initially approved by 60 percent of registered voters when the voter turnout exceeds 40 percent of the voter turnout at the last general election. When the turnout is less than 40 percent of voter turnout at the last general election, the yes votes must exceed 24 percent of the total number of votes in the last general election. If approved, a taxing district can impose a regular property tax levy at a rate not to exceed 50 cents per \$1,000 assessed value.

Taxing districts that are permitted to seek authorization for an EMS levy are counties, emergency medical service districts, cities or towns, public hospital districts, urban emergency medical service districts, regional fire protection authorities, and fire protection districts.

The uninterrupted continuation of a six-year or 10-year EMS levy that has a maximum levy rate the same as or lower than the prior voter-approved levy requires simple majority voter approval. If the maximum tax rate is higher than the prior voter-approved levy, the levy requires supermajority voter approval.

A countywide levy proposal may not be placed on a ballot without approval of the legislative authority of every city in the county that has a population in excess of 50,000.

Summary of Amended Bill: Taxing districts are permitted to continue an existing six-year or ten-year levy with simple majority ballot approval, regardless of whether the tax rate increases, decreases, or remains the same. A newly formed regional fire protection service authority is allowed to initially impose an EMS levy with a simple majority vote if all of the area comprising the newly formed authorized was subject to an EMS levy immediately prior to the formation of the authority.

In order to place a countywide EMS levy on a ballot, the requirement that 100 percent of the cities with a population greater than 50,000 must approve the ballot proposition is changed to 75 percent.

EFFECT OF WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):

- Allows a newly formed regional fire protection service authority to initially impose an EMS levy with a simple majority vote if all of the area comprising the newly formed authorized was subject to an EMS levy immediately prior to the formation of the authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: The bill would already allow for a simple majority vote for the continuation of existing EMS levies. It only makes sense that the initial imposition of an EMS levy for a newly created regional fire protection authority should be subject to a simple majority vote if all of the participating entities had EMS levies. This leads to increased efficiency. The legislation to allow a simple majority vote for renewal of 6-year and 10-year levies was enacted in 2012. This bill fixes a 2013 attorney general opinion that limits renewals. The amendment request to allow a simple majority vote for newly formed regional fire authorities would lead to better efficiency and eliminate redundancies and prevent a disincentive to regionalizing fire protection services.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Doug Dahl, Washington State Fire Chiefs, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters; Geoff Simpson, Washington State Council Of Fire Fighters.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.