

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1573

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Relations

Title: An act relating to revising the period in which the oath of office must be taken for elective offices of counties, cities, towns, and special purpose districts.

Brief Description: Revising the period in which the oath of office must be taken for elective offices of counties, cities, towns, and special purpose districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Parshley, Hunt, Doglio and Reed.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 1/28/25, 2/4/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the period during which a person elected to certain local offices may take the oath of office to be between the date of the certification of the election and the day before the term of office begins.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Mena, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Waters, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Doglio and Farivar.

Staff: Desiree Omli (786-7105).

Background:

After the election results have been certified, any person elected to an office in the State of Washington, including positions within counties, cities, towns, and special districts, is

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required by statute to take an oath or affirmation of office prior to serving. The term for an elected official typically begins on January 1 or whenever the individual takes the oath of office, whichever is later. When an individual is elected to office, they swear or affirm that they will faithfully and impartially discharge the duties of the office to the best of their ability. Many jurisdictions administer the oath at a formal meeting of the governing body, although this is not a requirement. For most local elected officials, the oath or affirmation must be filed with the county auditor; this is not typically a requirement for special purpose districts.

A person elected to local office, except for school district positions, must take the oath as a last step of qualification for the office. Oaths can be administered:

1. up to 10 days before the scheduled date of assuming office; or
2. at the last regular meeting of the governing body of the county, city, town, or special purpose district held before the winner is to assume office.

Summary of Bill:

The period during which a person elected to local office may take the oath of office, when not taking the oath at the last regular meeting of the governing body, is modified to authorize the oath to be taken between the date of certification of the election and the day before the term of office begins.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Local governments need for more freedom in the timing of when they swear in newly elected officials. In some counties, the only time they can give an oath is during the winter holidays because many terms begin on January 1 and the oath currently has to be taken at least 10 days before their term of office starts. This period is a busy time for travel and vacation, and is usually when newly elected candidates take time for their families after months spent campaigning. Expanding the time frame that a newly elected official has to take an oath of office to allow the oath to be taken up until the day before they are supposed to assume office promotes flexibility and efficiency. Being able to hold swearing in ceremonies around the time of election certification would enable counties to show the public what a certification meeting is like.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Lisa Parshley, prime sponsor; and Mary Hall, Thurston County Auditor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.