

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2588

Chapter 187, Laws of 2026

69th Legislature
2026 Regular Session

COUNTY FERRY DISTRICTS—VARIOUS PROVISIONS

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 11, 2026

Passed by the House March 11, 2026
Yeas 56 Nays 40

LAURIE JINKINS

**Speaker of the House of
Representatives**

Passed by the Senate March 6, 2026
Yeas 30 Nays 17

DENNY HECK

President of the Senate

Approved March 24, 2026 11:02 AM

BOB FERGUSON

Governor of the State of Washington

CERTIFICATE

I, Bernard Dean, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2588** as passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on the dates hereon set forth.

BERNARD DEAN

Chief Clerk

FILED

March 25, 2026

**Secretary of State
State of Washington**

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2588

AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

Passed Legislature - 2026 Regular Session

State of Washington 69th Legislature 2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Timmons, Ramel, and Lekanoff

Read first time 01/20/26. Referred to Committee on Local Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to county ferry district authority; amending RCW
2 36.54.110, 36.54.120, 36.54.130, and 36.54.135; reenacting and
3 amending RCW 47.60.120; and adding a new section to chapter 36.54
4 RCW.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 36.54.110 and 2007 c 223 s 5 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (1) The legislative authority of a county may adopt an ordinance
9 creating a ferry district in all (~~or a portion~~) of the area of the
10 county, including the area within the corporate limits of any city or
11 town within the county. The ordinance may be adopted only after a
12 public hearing has been held on the creation of a ferry district, and
13 the county legislative authority makes a finding that it is in the
14 public interest to create the district.

15 (2) A ferry district is a municipal corporation, an independent
16 taxing "authority" within the meaning of Article VII, section 1 of
17 the state Constitution, and a "taxing district" within the meaning of
18 Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution.

19 (3) A ferry district is a body corporate and possesses all the
20 usual powers of a corporation for public purposes as well as all
21 other powers that may now or hereafter be specifically conferred by

1 statute, including, but not limited to, the authority to hire
2 employees, staff, and services, to enter into contracts, and to sue
3 and be sued.

4 (4) The members of the county legislative authority, acting ex
5 officio and independently, shall compose the governing body of any
6 ferry district that is created within the county. The voters of a
7 ferry district must be registered voters residing within the
8 boundaries of the district.

9 (5) A county with a population greater than one million persons
10 and having a boundary on Puget Sound, or a county to the west of
11 Puget Sound with a population greater than two hundred thirty
12 thousand but less than three hundred thousand persons, proposing to
13 create a ferry district to assume a passenger-only ferry route
14 between Vashon and Seattle, including an expansion of that route to
15 include Southworth, shall first receive approval from the governor
16 after submitting a complete business plan to the governor and the
17 legislature by November 1, 2007. The business plan must, at a
18 minimum, include hours of operation, vessel needs, labor needs,
19 proposed routes, passenger terminal facilities, passenger rates,
20 anticipated federal and local funding, coordination with Washington
21 state ferry system, coordination with existing transit providers,
22 long-term operation and maintenance needs, and long-term financial
23 plan. The business plan may include provisions regarding coordination
24 with an appropriate county to participate in a joint ferry under RCW
25 36.54.030 through 36.54.070. In order to be considered for assuming
26 the route, the ferry district shall ensure that the route will be
27 operated only by the ferry district and not contracted out to a
28 private entity, all existing labor agreements will be honored, and
29 operations will begin no later than July 1, 2008. If the route is to
30 be expanded to include serving Southworth, the ferry district shall
31 enter into an interlocal agreement with the public transportation
32 benefit area serving the Southworth ferry terminal within thirty days
33 of beginning Southworth ferry service. For the purposes of this
34 subsection, Puget Sound is considered as extending north to Admiralty
35 Inlet.

36 **Sec. 2.** RCW 36.54.120 and 2003 c 83 s 302 are each amended to
37 read as follows:

38 A ferry district may construct, purchase, operate, and maintain
39 (~~passenger-only~~) ferries or wharves at any unfordable stream, lake,

1 estuary, or bay within or bordering the ferry district, or between
2 portions of the ferry district, or between the ferry district and
3 other ferry districts, together with all the necessary boats,
4 grounds, roads, approaches, and landings appertaining thereto under
5 the direction and control of the governing body of the ferry
6 district, free or for toll as the governing body determines by
7 resolution.

8 **Sec. 3.** RCW 36.54.130 and 2009 c 551 s 4 are each amended to
9 read as follows:

10 (1) (a) To carry out the purposes for which ferry districts are
11 created, the governing body of a ferry district may levy each year an
12 ad valorem tax on all taxable property located in the district not to
13 exceed (~~(seventy-five)~~) 75 cents per thousand dollars of assessed
14 value, except a ferry district in a county with a population of (~~one~~
15 ~~million five hundred thousand~~) 1,500,000 or more may not levy at a
16 rate that exceeds seven and one-half cents per (~~(thousand dollars)~~)
17 \$1,000 of assessed value. The levy must be sufficient for the
18 provision of ferry services as shown to be required by the budget
19 prepared by the governing body of the ferry district.

20 (b) Except for a ferry district in a county with a population of
21 1,500,000 or more, no ad valorem tax greater than 10 cents per \$1,000
22 of assessed value may be imposed under this section by a ferry
23 district created after the effective date of this section without
24 approval of a majority of the voters in the district voting on a
25 proposition at a general or special election.

26 (2) A tax imposed under this section may be used only for:

27 (a) Providing ferry services, including the purchase, lease, or
28 rental of ferry vessels and dock facilities;

29 (b) The operation, maintenance, and improvement of ferry vessels
30 and dock facilities;

31 (c) Providing shuttle services between the ferry terminal and
32 passenger parking facilities, and other landside improvements
33 directly related to the provision of (~~(passenger-only)~~) ferry
34 service; and

35 (d) Related personnel costs.

36 **Sec. 4.** RCW 36.54.135 and 2007 c 223 s 7 are each amended to
37 read as follows:

1 (1) A county ferry district may incur general indebtedness, and
2 issue general obligation bonds, to finance the construction,
3 purchase, and preservation of (~~passenger-only~~) ferries and
4 associated terminals and retire the indebtedness in whole or in part
5 from the revenues received from the tax levy authorized in RCW
6 36.54.130.

7 (2) The ordinance adopted by the county legislative authority
8 creating the county ferry district and authorizing the use of
9 revenues received from the tax levy authorized in RCW 36.54.130 must
10 indicate an intent to incur this indebtedness and the maximum amount
11 of this indebtedness that is contemplated.

12 **Sec. 5.** RCW 47.60.120 and 2003 c 83 s 204 and 2003 c 373 s 2 are
13 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

14 (1) If the department acquires or constructs, maintains, and
15 operates any ferry crossings upon or toll bridges over Puget Sound or
16 any of its tributary or connecting waters, there shall not be
17 constructed, operated, or maintained any other ferry crossing upon or
18 bridge over any such waters within (~~ten~~) 10 miles of any such
19 crossing or bridge operated or maintained by the department excepting
20 such bridges or ferry crossings in existence, and being operated and
21 maintained under a lawfully issued franchise at the time of the
22 location of the ferry crossing or construction of the toll bridge by
23 the department.

24 (2) The (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile distance in subsection (1) of this
25 section means (~~ten~~) 10 statute miles measured by airline distance.
26 The (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile restriction shall be applied by comparing
27 the two end points (termini) of a state ferry crossing to those of a
28 private ferry crossing.

29 (3) The Washington utilities and transportation commission may,
30 upon written petition of a commercial ferry operator certificated or
31 applying for certification under chapter 81.84 RCW, and upon notice
32 and hearing, grant a waiver from the (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile
33 restriction. The waiver must not be detrimental to the public
34 interest. In making a decision to waive the (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile
35 restriction, the commission shall consider, but is not limited to,
36 the impact of the waiver on transportation congestion mitigation, air
37 quality improvement, and the overall impact on the Washington state
38 ferry system. The commission shall act upon a request for a waiver
39 within (~~ninety~~) 90 days after the conclusion of the hearing. A

1 waiver is effective for a period of five years from the date of
2 issuance. At the end of five years the waiver becomes permanent
3 unless appealed within (~~thirty~~) 30 days by the commission on its
4 own motion, the department, or an interested party.

5 (4) The department shall not maintain and operate any ferry
6 crossing or toll bridge over Puget Sound or any of its tributary or
7 connecting waters that would infringe upon any franchise lawfully
8 issued by the state and in existence and being exercised at the time
9 of the location of the ferry crossing or toll bridge by the
10 department, without first acquiring the rights granted to such
11 franchise holder under the franchise.

12 (5) This section does not apply to the operation of passenger-
13 only ferry service by public transportation benefit areas meeting the
14 requirements of RCW 36.57A.200 or to the operation of (~~passenger-~~
15 ~~only~~) ferry service by ferry districts.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 36.54
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2) of this
19 section, if the county legislative authority establishes a county
20 ferry district under RCW 36.54.110, it shall promptly appoint five
21 persons who are residents of the county to serve as the board members
22 of a county ferry district advisory committee. The board members
23 first appointed shall be designated in two groups of board members to
24 serve for terms of two and four years, respectively, from the date of
25 their appointment. Thereafter, board members shall be appointed for a
26 term of office of four years. Any vacancy shall be filled for the
27 remainder of the unexpired term by the county legislative authority.

28 (2) If a county transitioning from a county-owned ferry system to
29 a county ferry district has an existing, locally established ferry
30 advisory committee, the governing body of the ferry district shall
31 designate the existing committee to fulfill the requirements of this
32 section.

33 (3) At least three persons appointed to the county ferry district
34 advisory committee must be representative of frequent users of the
35 ferry system and two persons must represent other areas of the
36 county. The county legislative authority is encouraged to appoint at
37 least one member who is a member of a federally recognized Indian
38 tribe.

1 (4) The members of the county ferry district advisory committees
2 shall serve without fee or compensation.

Passed by the House March 11, 2026.

Passed by the Senate March 6, 2026.

Approved by the Governor March 24, 2026.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 25, 2026.

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