

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2113

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Education*

Title: An act relating to election of school board directors in first class school districts having within their boundaries a city with a population of four hundred thousand people or more in class AA counties.

Brief Description: Changing election procedures for school board directors in first class school districts having within their boundaries a city with a population of four hundred thousand people to nine directors, five by director district and four at-large.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Locke and H. Sommers.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, March 6, 1991, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 2113 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.*

Signed by 11 members: Representatives Peery, Chair; G. Fisher, Vice Chair; Cole; Dorn; Jones; Orr; Phillips; Rasmussen; Roland; H. Sommers; and Valle.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives Brough, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Betrozoff; Broback; Brumsickle; Holland; P. Johnson; and Neher.

Staff: Susan Kirkpatrick (786-7291).

Background: The 1989 Legislature commissioned a study of the Seattle Public School System. The purpose of the study was to provide an independent look at the school district's operation, budget, management, governance, and relationship with the community. The report was issued on November 15, 1990, and is referred to as the Cresap Report.

One of the major conclusions of the Cresap Report is that governance by the school board is the central problem to be addressed if Seattle School District is to function

effectively. The Cresap Report suggested that the Legislature consider a permanent change in the method of selecting board members, "in order to overcome the partisan perspective that now characterizes board operations."

Under current law, the method of electing school board members in a first class school district having within its boundaries a city with a population of 400,000 people or more in class AA counties (Seattle), is to elect seven board members from seven director districts. The residents of each director district vote on the school board candidates in the primary election and all the voters in the entire school district vote on each candidate in the general election.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The method of election for a first class school district having within its boundaries a city with a population of 400,000 in class AA counties is changed as follows:

- a) The number of school board members is changed from seven to nine;
- b) Six directors will be elected by director district. Candidates will be voted on by the voters in the director district in the primary election and by all the voters in the school district in the general election;
- c) Three directors will be elected at-large by all voters in the school district. There is no requirement regarding residency in a particular director district for these candidates.

The school board is required to establish six new director districts prior to June 30, 1991, the existing seven director positions are replaced with the nine new director positions as of July 10, 1991, and incumbent directors residing in a newly created director district are automatically appointed to that new director district position unless there are two incumbent directors residing in the same director district - in that situation, the school board, by lot, appoints one of the directors to the director district position and the other to one of the at-large positions. The school board is required to establish either four-year or two-year terms for each director position and, to the extent possible, is required to designate terms in such a way that incumbent directors will have terms under the new election system that are similar to their current terms.

Several technical changes also were made. References to "county committees" were replaced with "regional committees" to reflect current status. The duties of the regional

committees were amended to clarify that the role of the regional committee is to approve the boundaries of director districts established by the school district.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The election method in the substitute bill for six director district positions and three at-large positions replaces the election method in the original bill for five director district positions and four at-large positions. The method by which the new election system will be implemented, including the provision that incumbents will be given similar terms, replaces the method of implementation in the original bill which provided that every school board member would be required to run for reelection in the 1991 elections.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The purpose of the bill is to bring new blood to the school board and to act on the needs addressed in the Cresap report. Changing the method of election will result in new vision and less partisanship. Reducing the number of director districts from seven to six will still ensure strong minority representation.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Locke, prime sponsor; and Representative Phillips.