

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1794

*As Passed House
March 18, 1991*

Title: An act relating to public hospital districts.

Brief Description: Concerning public hospital districts elections.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Bray, Mitchell, Haugen and Ferguson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Local Government, March 6, 1991, DP;
Passed House, March 18, 1991, 97-1.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 15 members: Representatives Haugen, Chair; Cooper, Vice Chair; Ferguson, Ranking Minority Member; Mitchell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Edmondson; Franklin; Horn; Nealey; Nelson; Rayburn; Roland; Wood; Wynne; and Zellinsky.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background: Commissioners of public hospital districts are elected to six-year terms. The board of commissioners consists of three members unless it is expanded to five or to seven members.

An increase in the number of commissioners requires voter approval. The proposition to increase the membership of the board is submitted to the voters either after the board passes a resolution calling for the increase, or after a petition calling for the increase in size is signed by 10 percent of the registered voters who voted in the last general election in the district.

All candidates for public hospital district commissioner are voted upon by the entire district. The statutes which govern commissioner districts are unclear. The board of commissioners of a public hospital district may abolish commissioner districts by resolution.

If an intracounty district expands to a five-member commission, then one commissioner is elected from each commissioner district, and two are elected at-large from the hospital district. If an intercounty district expands to a five-member commission, then two commissioners are elected from each commissioner district, and one commissioner is elected at-large from the hospital district.

If an intracounty district expands to a seven-member commission, then two commissioners are elected from each commissioner district, and one is elected at-large from the hospital district. If an intercounty district expands to a seven-member commission, then three commissioners are elected from each commissioner district and one commissioner is elected at large from the hospital district.

There is a 40 percent validation requirement for an election to create a public hospital district, but the law is silent on whether a simple majority vote is necessary to create a public hospital district.

Summary of Bill: The term of public hospital district commissioners is reduced to four years, except for those commissioners whose terms of office would have expired on January 1, 1992.

Commissioner districts are authorized for residency purposes only in all public hospital district elections, unless the district has abandoned the use of commissioner districts. If a public hospital district is county-wide, then the county legislative authority districts are used as hospital commissioner districts. In all other instances the county auditor of the county which has all or the greatest portion of the proposed district must create three commissioner districts which are as nearly as possible equal in population.

A public hospital district is created if the ballot proposition authorizing the creation of the district is approved by a simple majority vote of the voters of the proposed district who vote on the proposition, and the 40 percent validation requirement is met.

At the initial election to create a public hospital district, no primary shall be held. The election of the initial commissioners is null and void if creation of the district is not authorized.

The terms of office of the initial public hospital district commissioners is staggered in an odd-numbered year by providing the winning candidates for commissioner position number one and two each with a four-year term, and the

winning candidate for commissioner position three with a two-year term. If the election is held in an even-numbered year, the winning candidates for commissioner positions one and two are elected to a three-year term and the winning candidate for commissioner position three is elected to a one-year term.

The provisions which provide for the election of candidates from commissioner districts when the board of commissioners expands to five or seven members, depending upon whether the hospital district is intracounty or intercounty, are repealed.

If the number of commissioners increases to five, then the two new commissioner positions are not associated with a commissioner district. If the number of commissioners increases to seven, then one of the new commissioner positions is associated with each of the three commissioner districts, and the fourth new commissioner is not associated with a commissioner district.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: There are inconsistencies in the law pertaining to commissioner districts for hospital districts. This adopts the same procedures that are used for commissioner districts for public utility districts.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Greg Vigdor, Washington State Hospital Association; and Brad Berg, law firm of Foster, Pepper, Shefelman.