

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1201

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS,
APRIL 1, 1991

Brief Description: Removing references to county classes.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Cooper, Wood, Rayburn, Edmondson, Franklin, Haugen, Nealey, Zellinsky, Wynne, Bray, Mitchell, Roland and Ferguson).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Chairman; Roach, Vice Chairman; Madsen, and Sutherland.

Staff: Rod McAulay (786-7754)

Hearing Dates: March 27, 1991; April 1, 1991

BACKGROUND:

The current statute that classifies counties by population creates the following 11 classes: AA, A, and 1st through 9th, each associated with a descending range of population. This statute does not indicate how the population is determined for purposes of these classes.

Another statute permits counties to have a special county census pursuant to procedures specified by the Office of Financial Management, and that these population figures may be used to determine the class of the county.

In 1950, legislation was enacted providing that no change from the 1940 census in the classification of 7th, 8th, and 9th class counties shall occur until the board of commissioners of such counties makes an order reclassifying such counties. However, if no order is made, the federal official preliminary estimate or the final certificate of the 1950 census shall be considered as showing the actual population of the county.

The Office of Financial Management makes annual estimates of population for each county in the state that are accepted for a variety of purposes.

Counties have been classified by population since statehood and legislation has been enacted using these classifications to both combine the duties of certain county officers in certain classes of counties and to provide different levels of compensation for county officers depending on the class of the

county as is permitted by the State Constitution. In addition, legislation has been enacted classifying counties for other purposes.

Several statutes relate to election practices for port districts located in counties of a particular class that differ from general election law and from the practices of these port districts.

SUMMARY:

The classes of counties are eliminated. Every statute containing a classification of counties is altered to delete the class of counties, and the population range that is associated with the classification is substituted for the class. Each reference to class AA counties is altered to a county with a population of one million or more, which only refers to King County.

The latest determination of a county's population is used whenever a statute references the population of a county, whether established by a census, special county census, or population estimate by the Office of Financial Management.

Specific port district provisions of law are repealed that differ from general election laws and provide for different ways for a prospective candidate for port commissioner to file for office or for conducting port district elections, based upon the class of county in which the port district is located.

References for school districts including a city with a population of 400,000 or more, and located in a class AA county, are altered to delete the reference to the class AA county.

The classes of counties are altered, that were used to distinguish different counties in 1990 legislation relating to financing various types of transportation, to reference those counties by their existing population and other factors.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:

Whitman County may avoid merging the prosecutor and coroner positions into one office. Skamania County may continue to receive county forest land proceeds from DNR. Pierce County may continue to be treated as a class AA county with respect to the number of exempt positions in the sheriff's office. A house drafting error is corrected.

TESTIMONY FOR:

Makes classifications of counties more understandable and clarifies the points at which a county's classification changes.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Needs corrective amendment to avoid cut in funds for Skamania County.

TESTIFIED: Fred Saeger, Washington Association of County Officials (pro); Ed Callahan, Skamania County