

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2325

As Reported By House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to city and town elections.

Brief Description: Revising procedures for changing the plan of government for cities and towns.

Sponsors: Representatives Edmondson, H. Myers and Springer.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Local Government, January 28, 1994, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives H. Myers, Chair; Springer, Vice Chair; Edmondson, Ranking Minority Member; Reams, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee; R. Fisher; Horn; Moak; Rayburn; Van Luven; and Zellinsky.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: Cities and towns are divided into the following classifications:

- o First class city means a city with population of 10,000 or more operating under a city charter approved by city voters;
- o Second class city means a city with a population of 10,000 or more when the city incorporated or reorganized, that is not a code city;
- o Third class city means a city with a population of 1,500 to less than 10,000 when the city incorporated or reorganized, that is not a code city;
- o Town means a municipal corporation with a population less than 1,500 when the entity incorporated or reorganized, that is not a code city;

- o Code city means a city that either incorporated as a code city or reorganized from a regular city or town to a code city.

Cities and towns operate under different plans of government as follows:

- o Mayor/council plan where an elected council is the policy-making governing body, and a mayor is elected as a separate official with executive and administrative authorities.
- o Council/manager plan where an elected council is the policy-making governing body, including a chairperson who is also called the mayor but who does not possess administrative or executive authorities. A city or town manager is appointed by the council to act as the executive and administrator of the city or town.
- o Commission plan where three persons are elected as the policy-making governing body but also possess executive and administrative authorities.

The process of initiating a change in classification or plan of government begins with a petition of city or town voters. Signature requirements vary. The only changes that may be initiated by resolution of the governing body are: changing classification to a code city, or a code city changing its plan of government. In most instances ballot propositions authorizing the change are submitted to voters for their approval or rejection.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The procedures for cities and towns to reorganize under different classifications, other than a first class city with a city charter, and to alter their plans of government, are altered to:

- o Clarify the procedures by which these changes are made;
- o Allow ballot propositions authorizing the changes to be submitted to voters by action of the governing body;
- o Standardize the signature requirements for petitions proposing the change; and
- o Retain the terms of office of the existing governing body members, except when a city alters its plan of government to the commission plan.

Any additional positions that are required are filled as if vacancies existed. Any reduction in positions occurs

gradually, election-by-election, as the terms of office of existing members of the governing body end.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: A few technical changes were made. The standardized signature requirement is changed to 20 percent of the number of voters residing in the city or town.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This allows changes to be made without tossing all elected officials out of office. This allows change in the plan of government while maintaining stability among the officials.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Stan Finkelstein, Association of Washington Cities.