

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5329

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As Reported By House Committee On:  
Local Government

**Title:** An act relating to port districts.

**Brief Description:** Changing provisions relating to port districts.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Government Operations  
(originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, A. Smith and Talmadge).

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Local Government, April 2, 1993, DPA.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives H. Myers, Chair; Bray, Vice Chair; Reams, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee; Romero; Springer; and Van Luven.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Edmondson, Ranking Minority Member; R. Fisher; Rayburn; and Zellinsky.

**Staff:** Bill Lynch (786-7092).

**Background:** Port districts are governed by a board of three or five elected port commissioners. Port districts with a population of less than 500,000 are divided into three commissioner districts. In such port districts, each commissioner must reside in and be nominated from one of the commissioner districts, but all commissioners are elected at-large. Commissioner districts are not used in port districts with a population of 500,000 or more.

The voters of a port district may petition for an election to increase the commission from three to five commissioners. If a port district which is divided into three commissioner districts expands to five commissioners, the two additional commissioners are nominated and elected at-large and no new commissioner districts are created.

In less than countywide port districts, there is no authority or procedure to eliminate commissioner districts.

When creating a less than countywide port district with an assessed valuation of at least \$75 million in a county bordering on saltwater, commissioner districts are not used in the initial election.

When creating a countywide port district there is no provision for establishing the boundaries of commissioner districts prior to the election of the first commission.

When a port district attains a population of 500,000, the question of enlarging the commission from three to five members is automatically submitted to the voters.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Every countywide port district with less than 500,000 population shall be divided into three or five commissioner districts for purposes of nominating candidates.

In port districts with a population of 500,000 or more, a ballot proposition may be submitted to the voters authorizing the use of commissioner districts to nominate candidates. The ballot proposition may be initiated either by a resolution adopted by the commissioners, or a petition signed by registered voters in number at least equal to 10 percent of the number of voters voting in the last district general election.

A majority of the voters of a less than countywide port district may abolish the division of the district into commissioner districts. The issue may be placed on the ballot by resolution of the commission or on the petition of 10 percent of the voters.

When creating a countywide port district, commissioner districts are described in the petition or resolution calling for the formation of the port district.

When creating a less than countywide port district with an assessed valuation of at least \$75 million in a county bordering on saltwater, the petition initiating the creation of the district may describe commissioner districts, in which event, the initial commissioners shall be elected from the districts.

A ballot measure to increase a port district commission from three to five members may be initiated by a resolution of the commission. When a port district increases from three to five members, the incumbent commissioners shall divide the district into five commissioner districts. If two or

more incumbent commissioners reside in one of the newly created districts, those commissioners shall determine who will represent the district by lot. The commissioner not selected by lot shall represent one of the new districts in which no incumbent resides for the balance of his or her term. The two new commissioners shall be nominated from the remaining unrepresented commissioner districts.

Ballot measures on the question of increasing the number of commissioners to five or on the question of reducing the terms of commissioners from six to four years may be voted on at any special or general election date.

The section of the port district laws which was both amended and repealed in the same law enacted in 1992 is reenacted as amended.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** Port districts with a population of 500,000 or more may use commissioner districts to nominate candidates if approved in a ballot proposition. Any port district may abolish the use of commissioner districts, if approved in a ballot proposition.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** None. (All testimony pertained to a nonexistent amendment.)

**Witnesses:** Representative Jeanne Kohl; Pat Jones, Washington Public Ports Association; Nancy Bratton, Seattle Chamber of Commerce; Henry Yates, Port of Seattle; Wesley Yung, Port Works ILWU Local 19; and Robert Stern, Washington State Labor Council.