

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJR 4214

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to provide for a simple majority of voters voting to authorize school district levies.

Sponsors: Representatives G. Cole, Dorn, Brumsickle, Pruitt, Patterson, Rust, Sheldon, Leonard, Jones, Wineberry, Valle, Eide, King, Cothorn, Carlson, Holm, Ogden, L. Johnson, Quall, Springer and J. Kohl; by request of Washington State School Directors Association, Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, January 25, 1994, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Dorn, Chair; Cothorn, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; B. Thomas, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Eide; G. Fisher; Hansen; Holm; Jones; Karahalios; J. Kohl; Patterson; Pruitt; Roland; and L. Thomas.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: Ordinarily, when a school district seeks the approval of a bond issue or a tax levy, 60 percent of the votes cast at the election must be in favor of the issue or levy.

In addition, the number of persons voting on the proposal must equal at least 40 percent of the total number of votes cast in the district at the most recent general election.

The 60 percent supermajority and 40 percent validation requirements are imposed by Article VII, Section 2 and Article VIII, Section 6 of the state constitution and by statutes.

Summary of Substitute Bill: An amendment to Article VII, Section 2 and Article VIII, Section 6 of the state

constitution is to be submitted to the voters at the next general election.

The amendment would remove the 60 percent supermajority and 40 percent validation requirements for school district bond and levy elections, which would allow these levies and bonds to pass by a simple majority of those voting.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: A clause was added requiring the Secretary of State to publish notices in newspapers prior to the election in which the constitutional amendment will be voted upon.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 11, 1994.

Testimony For: It is easier to raise taxes to build prisons than it is to run and build schools. Other local governments do not have to ask their voters every two years for 20 percent of their budgets. Please let the voters decide this issue by passing the bill and putting the issue on the ballot.

Testimony Against: A small minority of citizens will be able to impose taxes on the majority. The current approval requirements are a safeguard against narrow interests and protect the public treasury.

Witnesses: SUPPORT: Marcia Holland, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Lynn McKinnon, Public Schools Employees of Washington; Marcia Costello, Washington Association of School Administrators; Karen Davis, Washington Education Association; Dwayne Slate and Susan Trimmingham, Washington State School Directors' Association; and Millard Battles, State Board of Education;

OPPOSED: Paul Telford, citizen; Linda Jordan, Ethical School Bonds Committee; and Skip Knox, citizen.