

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6024

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
FEBRUARY 4, 1994

Brief Description: Creating an optional county code study commission.

SPONSORS: Senators Haugen and Winsley

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; McCaslin and Winsley.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland and Owen.

Staff: Eugene Green (786-7405)

Hearing Dates: January 27, 1994; February 4 1994

BACKGROUND:

Counties are governed by many statutes that date back before statehood. Only five of the state's 39 counties are operating under a "home rule" charter, written under the provisions of Article XI, Section 4 of the State Constitution. No county has implemented a "home rule" charter under the provisions of Article XI, Section 16 of the State Constitution, to provide for the formation and government of a combined city-county municipal corporation. The citizens of this state have twice rejected constitutional amendments for the creation of a temporary county home rule commission. This commission would draft five alternative county home rule charters, any of which could be submitted at an election to the voters of any county. With the enactment of the Optional Municipal Code in 1967 (Title 35A), the state's cities have been extended broad powers of self-government with a choice of modern and efficient governance structures and procedures. More than one-half of Washington's cities have adopted the Optional Municipal Code.

SUMMARY:

A County Optional Code Study Commission is created. The commission consists of fifteen voting members appointed by the Governor, with at least one-third of the members to consist of members of the Legislature and elected county officials. Three members serve in an ex officio nonvoting capacity: the executive Director of the Washington State Association of Counties; the executive Director of the Washington Association

of County Officials; and the Director of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, who shall serve as chair of the commission.

Commission members shall serve without pay, at the pleasure of the Governor. Nonlegislative and legislative members shall be paid travel expenses incurred in their travel to and from meetings of the commission and while attending all meetings of the commission.

The commission shall develop recommended policy, statutory, and constitutional changes as determined to allow for a more efficient delivery of services. Areas of study should include, but not be limited to: (1) separation of policy and administration; (2) appointed county manager or elected executive; (3) number of councilmembers; (4) at-large or district elections; (5) partisan or nonpartisan elections; timing of elections; (6) modernization of statutes affecting all county elected officials; and (7) right of initiative and referendum.

The commission shall submit to the Governor and the Legislature a report containing the commission's findings, conclusions, and recommendations by November 1, 1995.

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development shall provide the necessary support for the commission. The department may employ such staff as is necessary to carry out the purposes of the commission.

The county optional code study commission account is created in the state treasury. Expenditures from the account may be used only for conducting the commission's study.

The sum of \$300,000 is appropriated for the biennium ending June 30, 1995, from the county sales and use tax equalization account to the county optional code study commission account for the study.

The County Optional Code Study Commission and its account in the state treasury expire on December 31, 1995.

Appropriation: \$300,000

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR: None

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: No one