

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1344

As Passed House

January 16, 1998

Title: An act relating to minutes of meetings held by county legislative authorities.

Brief Description: Requiring county legislative authorities to include a summary of public testimony in the written minutes.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Government Administration (originally sponsored by Representatives Mielke, Doumit, Pennington, Alexander, Boldt, Hatfield, Bush and Smith).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 2/26/97, 3/5/97 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/17/97, 68-30;

Passed House: 1/16/98, 73-15.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Reams; Smith; Wensman and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Dunshee; Murray and L. Thomas.

Staff: Michael Spiro (786-5793).

Background: The minutes of all regular and special meetings, except for executive sessions, of all public boards, commissions, agencies, or authorities must be promptly recorded, and such records must be open to public inspection. In addition, all of the proceedings of a county board of commissioners must be recorded by the clerk of the county board of commissioners, and all of the books, accounts, vouchers, and papers dealing with the business or property of a county are to be kept by the clerk of the county board of commissioners and be open to public inspection.

Summary of Bill: Voice recordings or written minutes must be kept for every public meeting of a county legislative authority and shall include any public testimony taken. This does not apply to executive sessions. Copies of voice recordings and written minutes must be made available to the public at a reasonable fee.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 23, 1997.

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

Testimony For: This is a very simple bill and a good idea; we want a record of what was said.

Testimony Against: The clerks are not the experts that can put the public testimony into a few sentences. They are there just to record what happens at the meeting, not what was said. Perhaps this is more of a local issue than a state issue, and local guidelines could be put together to deal with this.

Testified: Representative Mielke, prime sponsor. Gerri Rainwater, Pierce County Council; Sheila McCallister, Snohomish County; and Rose Bowman, Lewis County Commissioner (all opposed).