HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Olympia, Washington

<u>**Bill Analysis**</u>   Bill No. HB 1695

<u>Appts of county auditors in large counties</u>   Public Hrg: 2/19/97
Brief Title

<u>Reps. D. Sommers/Sheahan/Sterk</u>   Staff Contact: Mike Spiro
Sponsor   Comm. on Govt. Admin.
        Phone: 786-5793

BACKGROUND:

Under Article XI, Section 5 of the Washington State Constitution the Legislature must provide for the uniform election of county officials. This constitutional requirement does not apply, however, if a county has adopted its own home rule charter, as long as the county continues to abide by the state's constitution and general laws. In addition, the Legislature may classify the state's counties by population and provide for the election in certain classes of counties county officials who may combine the powers and duties of two or more county officials.

The Legislature has amended the laws governing the election of county officials twice to exempt certain counties from the uniform election requirement. In 1990, the Legislature allowed any noncharter county with a population of 300,000 or more to increase its board of commissioners to five members. In 1996, the Legislature authorized the legislative authority of any county with a population of 250,000 or more to appoint a county coroner.

SUMMARY:

The authority of certain counties to appoint county officials is increased. The legislative authority of any county that has a population of 200,000 or more may adopt a resolution or ordinance appointing a county auditor.

The county's legislative authority must adopt the resolution or ordinance appointing a county auditor at least 60 days before the first day of filing for the primary election for county offices. If the resolution or ordinance is adopted, it must be confirmed or rejected by the county's voters at the next special election. The date of the special election must be more than 45 days from the date the resolution or ordinance was adopted. If the resolution or ordinance is approved by a majority vote, an election will not be held for the position of county auditor unless another resolution or ordinance reinstating an election is approved by the voters of the county.

FISCAL NOTE: Not requested.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.