

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5521

As Passed House-Amended:

April 9, 1997

Title: An act relating to county research services.

Brief Description: Authorizing a county research service.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senator Haugen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 4/2/97, 4/4/97 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House-Amended: 4/9/97, 97-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Dunshee; Murray; Reams; Smith; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: The Municipal Research Council is a state agency that contracts to have municipal research and services provided for cities and towns. The council is composed of 18 members: (1) four appointed by the Speaker of the House with equal representation from each of the two major political parties; (2) four appointed by the President of the Senate with equal representation from each of the two major political parties; (3) one independent person appointed by the Governor; and (4) nine city and town officials appointed by the board of directors of the Association of Washington Cities. The activities and services of the Municipal Research Council are carried on in cooperation with the Association of Washington Cities.

For years the Municipal Research Council has contracted with the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington, a private nonprofit corporation, to provide these services for cities and towns.

Money appropriated by the Legislature to fund the Municipal Research Council is diverted from state motor vehicle excise tax receipts that otherwise would be distributed to cities and towns on a per capita basis.

The state imposes excise taxes on liquor, a portion of which is deposited in the liquor excise tax fund. Twenty percent of the liquor excise tax receipts that are placed into this fund are distributed to the counties of the state.

Summary of Bill: The responsibilities of the Municipal Research Council are expanded to include contracting for county research and services.

Membership on the Municipal Research Council is altered. The number of members on the Municipal Research Council is increased from 18 to 23 by expanding the council with five county officials appointed by the Governor, two from nominees submitted by the board of the Washington Association of County Officials and three from nominees submitted by the board of the Washington State Association of Counties. The Governor appoints the existing nine city or town officials from at least nine nominees submitted by the board of directors of the Association of Washington Cities Council, rather than the board of directors of the Association of Washington Cities making the appointments itself. Members who are appointed as legislators or local officials lose their council positions if they no longer are legislators or local officials.

A request for legal services by a county official shall be sent to the office of the county prosecuting attorney. A Municipal Research Council's response to a request for legal services shall be provided to the requesting county official and to the county prosecuting attorney.

The activities of the Municipal Research Council must be carried on in cooperation with the Washington State Association of Counties, in addition to the Association of Washington Cities.

Services provided to cities and towns by the Municipal Research Council shall be in proportion to the moneys appropriated for city and town research and services. Services provided to counties by the Municipal Research Council shall be in proportion to the moneys appropriated to county research and services.

The county research services account is created in the state treasury. Only moneys appropriated for the purposes of county research are transferred to the new account. Moneys in the county research services account may be spent only after appropriation and only to finance the costs of county research.

Each quarter and prior to making distributions of the state liquor excise tax receipts to counties, the state treasurer transfers enough liquor excise tax receipts to the county

research services account that, when combined with any cash balance in the account, are sufficient to fund allotments from any legislative appropriation from the county research services account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1997.

Testimony For: This will provide legal and other research services for counties, especially smaller counties. No state money is used.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Gary Lowe, Washington State Association of Counties; Rich Yukubousky, Municipal Research and Services Center; and Jim Justin, Association of Washington Cities.