

# HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

## HB 1477

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**Title:** An act relating to school district organization.

**Brief Description:** Revising school district organization provisions.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Haigh, Bush, Talcott, Linville, Santos and Edmonds; by request of Board of Education.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Meeting Date:** February 8, 1999.

**Bill Analysis Prepared by:** Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

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**Background:** The Legislature enacted the city or town districts– statute in 1909, primarily to ensure that each city or town is served by a single school district. Over the years, the Legislature has added several provisions regarding changing school district boundaries. Generally, citizens and school districts can petition to change school district boundaries through forming a new school district, consolidating school districts, or changing the territory of a school district. The legislature created regional committees in each of the 9 educational service district to review proposals on school district boundary changes. A regional committee can consider a school district boundary change on its own initiative, at the recommendation of the ESD superintendent, or whenever the committee considers it appropriate to do so. If the regional committee recommends a boundary change, the recommendation goes to the State Board of Education for approval. There are statutory guidelines and agency rules to be considered in recommending and approving boundary changes.

Typically, the regional committee and educational service district implement the boundary changes based on statutory provisions, such as reapportioning assets and obligations.

Special elections must be held when a new school district is being formed or when bond debt is being adjusted or transferred. If voters reject either the proposal to form a new district or adjust bond debt, the regional committee can modify the proposal and resubmit it to the State Board of Education for reconsideration as if it was an original proposal

**Summary of Bill:** The provisions in current law regarding forming school districts and changing school district boundaries are significantly modified. The city or town districts– statute, which generally provides that each city or town is served by a single

school district, is repealed. When a city or town changes boundaries, any proposed school district boundary changes will follow the general statutory process for such changes. School district boundary changes generally are still proposed by citizens and school districts, as under current law, although some modifications are made. In addition to petitioning to form a new school district, consolidate school districts, or change the territory of a school district, a petition can be filed to partition territory from one existing district to form a new school district. A school district can only be partitioned if a majority of registered voters in the partitioned territory sign the petition, each district will be a Class 1 district (2000 or more students) and a high school district, and a majority of voters in the original school district approve it in a special election.

The 9 regional committees are replaced by one State Council on School District Organization. The State Council is comprised of a person from each of the 9 Educational Service District (ESD) in Washington. The members serve without compensation, but expenses are reimbursed. The State Council hears and approves proposals referred to it by ESDs or school districts. Decisions by the State Council are appealable to the court. The appropriate ESD implements the approved school boundary changes. The statutory guidelines and agency rules regarding boundary changes remain similar to current law, except for the addition of two new guidelines: (1) the inclusion of master planned communities in a single school district; and (2) the history and relationship of the applicable area to the students and communities affected.

When a petition is received by the ESD, the ESD notifies the affected school districts who must then negotiate to see if an agreement can be reached regarding the petition between the affected school districts. Mediation is provided for. If agreement is reached, the ESD implements it; if no agreement is reached, the petition is forwarded to the State Council.

Current law requiring special elections in certain cases is retained; however, if voters reject either the proposal to form a new district or adjust bond debt, the proposal is defeated, rather than allowing the proposal to be resubmitted to the State Board of Education for reconsideration.

Proposals for school boundary changes initiated prior to the effective date of this act are to be processed under current law. Regional committee members remain in office until January 10, 2000. Provisions governing regional committees, and several other existing provisions are repealed immediately. Several current provisions are repealed and reenacted as new provisions.

***Appropriation:*** None.

***Fiscal Note:*** Requested on January 27, 1999.

***Effective Date:*** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

***Rulemaking Authority:*** The State Board of Education is given rulemaking authority, particularly related to the new State Council.