

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1547

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
State & Local Government, March 31, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to local retail sales and use tax for zoos and aquariums.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing a sales and use tax for zoo and aquarium purposes.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Mitchell, Lantz, Thomas, Dunshee, Campbell, Sullivan, Bush, Kastama, Conway, Scott, Regala, Miloscia, Fisher, McDonald and Huff).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State & Local Government: 3/29/99, 3/31/99 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Hale, Haugen, Horn and Kline.

**Staff:** Eugene Green (786-7405)

**Background:** The Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma currently finances and maintains a zoo, aquarium, and wildlife park which are currently accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association. Continued funding for these facilities from existing sources of revenue is questionable.

**Summary of Bill:** Upon the joint request of a metropolitan park district and a city with a population of more than 150,000, a county legislative authority in a county with a population of more than 500,000 and less than 1,000,000 (Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma, City of Tacoma, and Pierce County) may submit an authorizing proposition to the voters for the imposition of a sales and use tax, the rate of which may not exceed one-tenth of 1 percent. The proposition must be placed on a ballot no later than one year after the date of the joint request. If approved by a majority of those voting on the proposition, the moneys received from this tax can be used solely for the purpose of providing funds for the costs associated with the maintenance, construction, and improvements of zoo, aquarium, and wildlife preservation and display facilities that are currently accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association.

If the sales tax proposition has been approved by the voters, a zoo and aquarium advisory authority is created. The initial board of the authority consists of:

- three members appointed by the county legislative authority to represent unincorporated areas;

- two members appointed by the county legislative authority of the city with the largest population within the county; and
- two members jointly appointed by the legislative authorities of the remaining cities within the county representing at least 60 percent of the combined populations of the cities.

No term may be less than one year nor more than three years in duration.

The county treasurer (or home rule county equivalent) receives all money from the new zoo tax and disburses the money to the aquarium advisory authority. In addition to the standard purposes of maintaining the facilities, the aquarium advisory authority may, consistent with a joint effort among the county, metropolitan park district, and city:

- add to and improve the facilities, accept gifts and donations, and regulate the facilities together with all lands and rights-of-way necessary for the facilities;
- contract with the United States or any agency thereof, the state or any agency thereof or any unit of local government for the purposes of designing, maintaining, or operating the facilities;
- contract with any governmental agency, private person or firm for the use of any part of the facilities or structures or land; and
- fix rates and charges for the use of the facilities.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** This is an attempt to regionalize, in part, the funding and decision making for the zoo, aquarium, and wildlife park financed by the Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma. The facilities are in need of capital and operating funds. The facilities are a regional attraction.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Gary Geddes, Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma; Chris Loftis, NW Trek Advisory Council; John Thompson, Pierce County Labor Council Operating Engineers; Patty Henson, Bob Mack, Point Defiance Zoo.