

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2392

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
State & Local Government, February 24, 2000

Title: An act relating to the funding and delivery of local government services.

Brief Description: Creating the joint task force on local governments.

Sponsors: House Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Doumit, Mulliken, Scott, Mielke, Miloscia, Hatfield, Fortunato, Fisher, Kenney, Edwards and Wolfe).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State & Local Government: 2/17/2000, 2/24/2000 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

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

Staff: Eugene Green (786-7405)

Background: Increased demand for public services and limited revenue to meet these services has led to unproductive competition between cities, counties, and the state for the revenue that is collected and shared between cities, counties, and the state.

Summary of Amended Bill: A joint legislative task force is created to study the funding and delivery of local government services. The task force commences on July 1, 2000, and is to report interim findings and recommendations during the 2001 session, and have a final report, including proposed legislation, prepared for the 2002 session. The task force is to complete a thorough study of the delivery of government services and the allotment of revenues and collection and distribution of various fines and forfeitures.

The task force is made up of 17 members, four each from the House of Representatives and Senate, four from the Association of Washington Cities, two from the Washington State Association of Counties, two from the Washington Association of County Officials, and a representative of the Governor. Experts and advisors must be appointed as nonvoting members to provide information on various subjects including, but not limited to, special purpose districts and public employee unions.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The task force is reduced from 32 members to 17 members. Administrative and procedural requirements are eliminated. The provisions on administrative agencies are eliminated. Task force members must appoint experts and advisors as nonvoting members including, but not limited to, special purpose districts and public employee unions. The emergency clause is eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The Legislature needs to focus on new costs to local governments; if new ideas are good enough and important enough, they should be fully funded. If there is no moratorium, then pay the full cost of a mandate. If the full cost is not covered, put in flexibility to let local governments work it out.

This issue cuts across all county services. Criminal justice eats up 60 percent of county budgets. Most counties are set up in state statute, and are doing jobs as an arm of state government. Most ordinances passed at the county level are required by the state or are to implement state programs. I-695 has exposed weaknesses of counties, and the question of whether or not they are necessary needs to be asked. County prosecuting attorneys' budgets are made up of 90 percent staff; they need predictability in costs for staffing levels.

Most of these problems existed prior to I-695, and local officials' jobs are much more difficult today. The local governments cannot walk away from rule making; however, there are times when locals prefer the rule to be changed. The relationship between the state and counties needs to be addressed, as the counties are not that much different from state agencies.

Special districts would like to be represented on the task force, as water/sewer serves 30 percent of the state; however, these districts are not taxing authorities. As current law reads, federal agencies and the Legislature shouldn't pass on unfunded mandates. Public employees would also like to be at the table, as members have lots of expertise.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Russ Hauge, WA Assn. of Prosecuting Attorneys; Stew Menefee, WA Assn. of County Officials; Bill Vogler, WA Assn. of County Commissioners; Dave Williams, AWC; Joe Daniels, WA Assn. of Sewer/Water Districts; Fred Hellberg, Governor's Office; Pat Thompson, County and City Employees; Doug Levy, Cities of Everett and Kent.