

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJR 4200

As Reported by House Committee On:
Criminal Justice & Corrections

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to allow extended levies for law enforcement purposes.

Sponsors: Representatives Carrell, O'Brien, Talcott, Conway, Cooper, Hinkle and Campbell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/29/03, 2/7/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes law enforcement levies for up to four-year periods for general purposes and up to six years for the construction, modernization or remodeling of law enforcement facilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives O'Brien, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Kagi and Lovick.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Mielke, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Pearson.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

Article VII, Section 2, of the State Constitution limits the aggregate of all tax levies upon real and personal property by the state and all taxing districts in any year to no more than 1 percent of the true and fair value of such property. This limitation may be exceeded at a "special" or excess levy election, by which any taxing district, when specifically authorized to do so by a majority of at least three-fifths of the voters of the taxing district on the proposition, may levy an additional tax for one year (if the voter turnout equals at least 40 percent of the previous general election turnout). Two exceptions to the one-year

special levy limit are those levies for the support of common schools and fire protection districts. Any proposition to levy additional tax for the support of common schools and fire protection districts may provide such support for a period of up to four years and any proposition to levy an additional tax to support the construction, modernization, or remodeling of school or fire facilities may provide such support for a period not exceeding six years.

Summary of Bill:

Law enforcement, when specifically authorized to do so by a majority of at least three-fifths of the voters of the taxing district on the proposition (if the voter turnout equals at least 40 percent of the previous general election turnout) may levy an additional tax for a period of up to four years for general purposes and for a period of up to six years for the construction, modernization, or remodeling of law enforcement facilities, as specified in the ballot proposition.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Testimony For: This constitutional amendment is very similar to what the Legislature passed last year for fire departments which gave a voter-approved override of the tax limits for fire protection. The people in this state overwhelmingly supported fire districts and they will overwhelmingly support law enforcement as the most essential service being supplied by local government.

This bill is one piece of legislation, out of several, that cities and counties have put together as a joint proposal. This gives the police the ability to go to the voters and tell them what they believe we need in order to keep our communities safe, and in turn, ask the voters if they are willing to pay additional taxes for those extra services. This is an option for local governments.

Law enforcement is the largest component of local government's budgets today. Some counties have thought about levying taxes for law enforcement purposes for one year in the past. However, by the time the law enforcement agencies hire and train their officers, the year is already over and it is time to levy the voters again. Allowing law enforcement agencies to levy taxes for four-year periods is much more feasible.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Carrell, prime sponsor; Larry Erickson, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Bill Vogler, Washington State Association of

Counties; Debbie Wilke, Washington Association of County Officials; Jim Justin, Association of Washington Cities; and Randy Lewis, City of Tacoma.