

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1596

As Reported by House Committee On:

Local Government

Title: An act relating to the surcharge for preservation of historical documents.

Brief Description: Increasing the surcharge for the preservation of historical documents.

Sponsors: Representatives Dunshee, Romero, Haigh, Benson, Wood, Moeller and Sullivan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/13/03, 3/3/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the surcharge for preservation of historical documents on recorded documents from \$2 to \$5.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Romero, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Clibborn and Moeller.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Schindler, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Ericksen and Mielke.

Staff: Anne Warwick (786-7291); Amy Wood (786-7127).

Background:

The Legislature enacted the Centennial Document Preservation Act of 1989 to preserve historical documents before they are irreparably damaged. Many old documents recorded or filed with county auditors are deteriorating due to age and environmental degradation. The county auditors are authorized to impose a \$2 surcharge per document on the filing of any document with the county auditor to fund historical preservation of documents.

Half of this surcharge is retained by the county and deposited into the auditor's operation

and maintenance fund to be used for the ongoing preservation of historical documents held by the auditor. The other half of this surcharge is transmitted to the State Treasurer who distributes these receipts monthly to counties under the following formula: (1) Half of these monies are distributed equally among the 39 counties; and (2) the other half is distributed to counties in direct proportion to their populations. The monies are placed into a special account titled the Auditor's Centennial Document Preservation and Modernization Account and are used for document preservation equipment and the preservation of historical documents in the possession of the county auditor.

Summary of Bill:

The \$2 surcharge per document for historical preservation is raised to a \$5 surcharge per document.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The current historical document preservation fee is available by statute to all county officials. All county clerks, auditors, treasurers, etc., have records of equal importance that need to be preserved. The fee increase will benefit all county offices. Historical documents need to be imaged in addition to being microfiched. It is important for these documents to be imaged and preserved so that they can be made available to the public. The current historical document surcharge has purchased some imaging equipment, but more is needed. After the documents are imaged they are sent to the Regional State Archivist for safe storage in a climate controlled environment. One of the highlights of the current historical document preservation fund is that half of the collected fee is redistributed to smaller counties which rely heavily on the fee for document preservation. Many times document preservation is not high on county budgets, so this dedicated fund is necessary for historical document archiving.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Alexander, prime sponsor; Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County Auditor; Betty J. Gould, Thurston County Clerk; and David Bowen, Kittitas County Auditor.