

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6539

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Economic Development, February 4, 2004

Title: An act relating to economic development of historic county courthouses.

Brief Description: Establishing the historic county courthouse grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Hewitt, Jacobsen, Honeyford, Haugen, Carlson, Kline, Winsley and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Economic Development: 1/28/04, 2/4/04 [DPS-WM, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6539 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators T. Sheldon, Chair; Zarelli, Vice Chair; Hale, Murray, Schmidt and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Benton.

Staff: Jack Brummel (786-7428)

Background: 28 of the county courthouses in the state appear to meet the state criteria for historic buildings. Rehabilitation of these courthouses is considered a priority for advocates of historic preservation.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Historic County Courthouse Grant Program is created, to be administered by the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development's Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. The Historic County Courthouse Account is created in the state treasury to fund the grant program. Grants received must be matched with funds from other sources.

The program has an advisory committee and may not expend more than 1 percent of available funds on administrative purposes. Criteria for use of the grants are established and the department is charged with establishing further criteria and an application process.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill specifies that the advisory board is to make recommendations to the office. Technical corrections are made to the appropriation section.

Appropriation: \$10,000,000.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2004.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2004.

Testimony For: In many of the county seats, the courthouse is the premier building. Most counties have done a good job of maintenance but when it comes to major capital needs, the courthouses have had to wait. Some are not habitable during bad weather conditions. This program will help preserve the character of the buildings. These courthouses need to be brought into the 21st century while preserving their historic character.

Testimony Against: None

Testified: PRO: Herb Baze, Mason Co. Commissioner; Dau Titterness, Jefferson Co. Commissioner; Michael Sullivan, WA Trust for Historic Preservation; Paul Parker, WA St. Assoc. of Counties.