

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6555

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Local Government

**Title:** An act relating to research and services for special purpose districts.

**Brief Description:** Providing research and services for special purpose districts.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Haugen, Mulliken, Berkey, Kastama and Rasmussen).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Local Government: 2/22/06, 2/23/06 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Authorizes the Municipal Research Council to contract for the provision of consulting and research services to special purpose districts.
- Provides a funding mechanism for the provision of consulting and research services to special purpose districts.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Simpson, Chair; Clibborn, Vice Chair; Schindler, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; B. Sullivan, Takko and Woods.

**Staff:** Thamas Osborn (786-7129).

**Background:**

***Special Purpose Districts***

Local governmental functions are generally performed by counties, cities, and towns. However, Washington law also creates a multitude of smaller governmental entities known as "special purpose districts," which are authorized to provide a wide range of highly specialized functions and services not ordinarily provided by the larger units of local government. The creation, authority, duties, and dissolution of special purpose districts are controlled by statutory procedures.

Most special purpose districts perform a single function, although some serve a broader range of purposes. As of 2003, there were approximately 1,700 special purpose districts in this

state, encompassing approximately 80 different categories. Among the numerous categories of "special purpose districts" are the following:

- air pollution control authorities;
- port districts;
- water-sewer districts;
- conservation districts;
- airport districts;
- fire protection districts;
- flood control districts;
- public housing authorities;
- library districts;
- public utility districts;
- park and recreation districts;
- ferry districts;
- irrigation districts;
- transportation districts; and
- hospital districts.

### ***Municipal Research Council***

The Municipal Research Council (Council) is a state agency whose mission is to provide cities and counties in Washington with an affordable source of research, consultation services, and technical expertise. The Council consists of 14 members appointed by the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, and various other agencies and organizations. The Council's funding is derived from a percentage of both the liquor excise tax and the liquor sales profits distributed to local governments. The programs of the Council are implemented through a contract with a non-profit organization known as the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC).

The MRSC is an independent, non-profit organization created in 1969 to implement the programs of the Council by providing professional consultation, research, and information services to local governments in Washington. The MRSC is governed by a board of directors consisting of local government officials as well as citizen members. Although the MRSC does not engage in political activity, it works in cooperation with the Washington State Association of Counties, the Association of Washington Cities, and the Washington Association of County Officials.

The Council is not currently authorized to provide research or consulting services to special purpose districts.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

#### ***Research and Consulting Services for Special Purpose Districts***

The Council is authorized to contract for the provision of research and consulting services to special purpose districts. The contract must be with a state agency, educational institution or consulting firm that the Council determines is qualified to provide such services.

The research and services provided to special purpose districts under the contract must consist of the following:

- study and research of pertinent issue areas;
- providing relevant publications; and
- furnishing specified consulting and field services.

***Funding of Research and Consulting Services for Special Purpose Districts***

The funding of the services provided to special purpose districts shall consist of moneys transferred by the Legislature to a designated "special purpose district research services account" in the state treasury. The funds in the account are derived from a portion of state liquor sales revenues. The State Treasurer is authorized to deposit funds into the account in accordance with specified procedures. Moneys in the account may only be spent after legislative appropriation and are subject to the budgetary allotment process.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** The passage of this bill will enable special purpose districts to have access to the technical and legal information they need in order to meet their responsibilities and better serve the public. Small rural districts will especially benefit from the research and consulting services made available by the bill, since they often do not have the staff support or financial resources necessary to obtain such services.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** Ginger Eagle, Washington Public Ports Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.