

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5331

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 17, 2005

Title: An act relating to creating a historic county courthouse program.

Brief Description: Establishing the historic county courthouse grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Doumit, Hewitt, Brown, Honeyford, Fraser, Hargrove, Parlette and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/1/05, 2/17/05 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 3/1/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5331 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Fairley, Haugen, Kline, McCaslin and Pridemore.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Mulliken.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation. Signed by Senator Roach.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Kirstan Arestad (786-7708)

Background: Of the 39 courthouses in the state, 28 appear to meet the criteria of state historic buildings. All 28 courthouses are currently in use as active seats of county government. Some assert that these buildings are in need of capital improvements to protect their safety and historic and architectural integrity.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A new account is created in the State Treasury into which is appropriated twenty-million dollars for the biennium ending June 30, 2007, from the public works assistance account.

The exclusive use to which these funds may be put is to fund the Historic County Courthouse Grant program to protect and preserve courthouses that meet the eligibility requirements for the Washington Heritage register. Counties must provide equal matching funds from public

or private sources. No more than one percent of the expenditures from the account may be used for administrative purposes. This grant program is administered by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP).

An advisory board is established by OAHP. The advisory board has 12 members if all three at-large members are appointed.

By October 1, 2005, OHAP must establish an application process. All rehabilitation work must comply with the federal Department of the Interior's standards for rehabilitation. Grants may not be used for maintenance. Only courthouses that continue to be used for county functions are eligible for grants. Any surplus in the account may be awarded to applications from historic county-owned facilities such as libraries, museums, and hospitals that meet grant criteria.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill used the state building construction account as the source of the grants. The references to the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, and the emergency clause in the original bill are removed from the substitute bill.

Appropriation: Twenty-million dollars is appropriated for the biennium ending June 30, 2007, from the public works assistance account to the Historic County Courthouse account.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Testimony For: It is very expensive to renovate historic buildings into the modern forms required by seismic, electrical, mechanical and other codes. Yes, there is the heritage capital project program but it was never intended to fund the size of projects these courthouses represent. Court houses represent enduring values, are symbols of government and house the living history of the community. It is imperative to take care of deferred needs before we loose the buildings entirely.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Michael Sullivan, Washington Trust for Historic Preservation; Don, Brubeck, Washington Council american Institute of Architects; Paul Parker, Washingto State Association of Counties; Connie Phil Johnson, Jefferson County; Gordon Ramstrom, Jefferson County.