

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1280

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to the use of the school district capital projects funds for technology.

Brief Description: Providing for the use of the school district capital projects funds for technology.

Sponsors: Representatives Ericks, Jarrett, Quall, O'Brien, Strow, Morrell, Roach, Hunt, McDonald, Chase, Simpson, Haler, Moeller, McCune, Schual-Berke, Miloscia and Springer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/16/07, 2/26/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Expands authorized uses of school district capital projects funds to include application and modernization of technology systems, including ongoing fees for online applications, subscriptions, or licenses; upgrades and incidental services; and ongoing training on the integration of technology.
- Requires districts to transfer capital projects funds to the district general fund when using the funds for this purpose, and requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop accounting guidelines for the transfers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, McDermott, Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

School districts must establish a general fund for maintenance and operations of the district and a capital projects fund for major capital projects. Proceeds from bond sales, capital fund investments, and excess levies for construction, modernization or remodeling of school facilities (capital levies) are deposited in the capital projects fund. Monies in the capital projects fund can be used for specified purposes, including major renovation, energy capital improvements, and major items of equipment and furniture (except vehicles). Since 2002, capital project funds may also be used for the costs of implementing technology systems, facilities, and projects; acquiring hardware, licensing software, and online applications; and training related to technology installation.

Some school districts propose technology levies to their voters. Technology levies are really capital levies that the school district proposes to use for technology as allowed by the law. Under the State Constitution and statute, capital levies may be authorized for up to six years. There is no levy lid for capital levies.

School districts pay for other technology costs from their general maintenance and operations fund with funds coming from state allocations for nonemployee-related costs (NERC) and any local maintenance and operations levies. School districts that do not have capital levies may be relying on maintenance and operating funds for all technology-related purchases.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The authorized uses of school district capital projects funds for technology are expanded to include costs associated with the application and modernization of technology systems for operations and instruction. These costs include ongoing fees for on-line applications, subscriptions, or software license; upgrades and incidental services; and ongoing training related to the installation and integration of the technology.

A school district using capital projects funds for the expanded purposes must transfer the funds to the district's general fund. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must adopt accounting guidelines for these transfers.

The limitations of current law that prevent a district from authorizing more than one maintenance and operations levy during the same time period do not apply to capital levies.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Capital projects funds may be used for technology systems associated with operations and instruction. Fees and training costs must be ongoing costs. A school district using capital projects funds for the expanded purposes must transfer the funds to the district's general fund. The SPI must adopt accounting guidelines. The limitations of current law that prevent a district from authorizing more than one maintenance and operations levy during the same time period do not apply to capital levies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There used to be a clear division between "operating" and "capital" in the accounting world, but technology changes all that. When you make large technology investments, you must also invest in the software to run the hardware. Purchasing a software license or upgrade is the same thing as buying the computer system again. The legislation authorizing use of capital funds for technology was widely approved. There is no fiscal impact on the state. This is a logical extension and next step. Technology is an essential tool in the education toolkit. This provides flexibility for school districts in how they allocate their resources. Technology is as much a part of the infrastructure of a school as bricks and mortar.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ericks, prime sponsor; Grace Yuan, School Technology Coalition; Dick Anastasi, Northshore School District; Lorraine Wilson, Tacoma Public Schools; and Mitch Denning, Alliance of Education Associations.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.