

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2416

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to equitable allocation of auditor costs.

Brief Description: Concerning equitable allocation of auditor costs.

Sponsors: Representative Takko.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/20/12, 1/25/12 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes county auditors to establish the actual cost-per-hour of searching records and conspicuously post this cost.
- Requires county auditors to set the fee for searching records at \$8 per hour if the actual per hour cost is not determined.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Takko, Chair; Fitzgibbon, Vice Chair; Angel, Ranking Minority Member; Asay, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Smith, Springer, Tharinger and Upthegrove.

Staff: Ann Koepke (786-7291) and Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

County auditors (or recording officers, in charter counties) collect fees for the provision of their official services. Examples of services for which county auditors collect a statutorily defined fee include, among others:

- preparing and certifying copies;
- administering an oath or taking an affidavit;
- recording plats; and

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- searching records.

Current statute sets the fee for searching records at \$8 per hour.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

House Bill 2416 authorizes county auditors to establish the actual cost of searching records and conspicuously post this cost. Employee salary and benefit costs may be included in the actual cost for searching records, but general and administrative overhead costs may not be included in the actual cost. If the auditor does not determine the actual per hour cost for searching records, the fee remains set at \$8 as is currently defined in statute.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill allows employee salary and benefit costs to be included in the actual cost for searching records and states that general and administrative overhead costs may not be included in the actual cost.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) By statute, county auditors are allowed to charge \$8 per hour, but this rate has not been adjusted since 1985. The actual hourly cost of searching records is substantially higher, and ranges from \$21-\$46 per hour, with an average cost of \$31 per hour. When county employees are asked to conduct searches for private parties, they are essentially using public funds to fulfill a private, and often commercial request. This bill would change the amount charged to reflect the actual cost and allow local governments to recover the costs of providing this service to private and commercial customers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Takko, prime sponsor; Julie Anderson, Washington State Association of County Auditors; and Monty Cobb, Washington Association of County Officials.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.