

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 2602

As of February 20, 2012

Title: An act relating to a joint select committee on junior taxing districts.

Brief Description: Establishing a joint select committee on junior taxing districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Eddy, Springer, Takko, Carlyle and Tharinger.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/12, 93-4.

Committee Activity: Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/21/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: Since the late 19th Century, Washington has authorized more than 80 different types of special purpose districts. Special purpose districts are local government entities that provide a single or a limited number of services or facilities. They thus differ in scope from counties, cities, and towns which provide many services and facilities and are recognized as general purpose local governments.

To date, more than 1700 special purpose districts have been established in Washington. They provide a multitude of services and facilities, including public schools, electricity, fire protection, flood control, public hospitals, public health services, air pollution control, soil conservation, cemeteries, housing, irrigation, parks and recreation, libraries, water-sewer utilities, stadiums, transportation services, port facilities, and weed control.

Procedures for creating particular types of special purpose districts vary. Some must be approved by voters, following submission of a local petition or adoption of a resolution by a local government governing body. Others may be created by local petition or action of local government governing bodies.

Many special purpose districts have elected governing bodies; others have appointed governing bodies. Some employ many public servants; others, few. Many may levy property taxes to raise revenue; others may impose other taxes, or varied fees or charges. Many may issue bonds and other debt instruments to raise revenue. The State Auditor's Office audits special purpose districts for compliance with financial requirements.

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.

A statutory provision concerning property taxes defines junior taxing districts to include all taxing districts other than the state, counties, road districts, cities, towns, port districts, and public utility districts. This definition encompasses almost all special purpose districts.

Summary of Bill: A joint select committee on junior taxing districts (committee) is established. Junior taxing district is defined to include all taxing districts other than the state, counties, cities, towns, and school districts. The committee must review junior taxing districts to evaluate their provided services and make recommendations regarding appropriateness for consolidation into a city or county. Voting members of the committee must report their findings and recommendations, in draft legislation, by November 1, 2012, to the Governor and the ways and means committees of the House and Senate, or their successor committees.

Each leader of the two largest parties in each house of the Legislature appoints one voting member to the committee. The Speaker and President of the Senate must jointly appoint two nonvoting members. The Governor must appoint one voting member. Appointments must be made by July 1, 2012.

The committee must choose its chair from its legislative membership. The appointee from the House majority caucus convenes the initial meeting.

The committee must seek pertinent information and advice from organizations representing counties, cities, and junior taxing districts; the Department of Revenue; the State Auditor; and the Office of the Attorney General.

Staff support must be provided by Senate Committee Services and the House Office of Program Research. Committee members must be reimbursed for travel expenses, except for members representing an employer or organization. Expenses must be paid jointly by the Senate and House, subject to approval by the Senate Facilities and Operations Committee and the House Executive Rules Committee, or their successor committees.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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