

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1013

As of February 26, 2014

Title: An act relating to authorizing regular meetings of county legislative authorities to be held at alternate locations within the county.

Brief Description: Authorizing regular meetings of county legislative authorities to be held at alternate locations within the county.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton, Seaquist, Ryu and Hansen.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/13, 62-36.

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 4/01/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: The commission form of government is the standard form of county government throughout the state for counties that do not adopt a home rule charter. Of Washington's 39 counties, 33 operate under the commission form of government. Under the commission form, the county governing body consists of a board of commissioners, elected on a partisan basis, who serve as the county's legislative body and also perform executive functions. Six Washington counties adopted home rule charters: King, Clallam, Whatcom, Snohomish, Pierce, and San Juan. Of the six charter counties, four adopted the council-elected executive form, one adopted the council-appointed administrator form, and one has adopted the commission-appointed administrator form.

County legislative authorities, including county councils and boards of county commissioners, hold regular meetings at county seats to transact business required or permitted by law. They may hold special meetings at other locations in the county if agenda items are of unique interest to citizens in those locations. However, county legislative authorities are not authorized to transact business required or permitted by law at special meetings held outside the county seat.

Summary of Bill: As an alternative option, the county legislative authority of each county may hold regular meetings at alternate locations outside of the county seat if the county legislative authority determines that changing the location of the meeting would be in the

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interest of supporting greater citizen engagement in local government. However, this is an alternative option that may be exercised only on an infrequent and irregular basis.

At least 20 days before holding a regular meeting outside of the county seat, the county legislative authority must give notice. Notice must: (1) be posted on the county's website; (2) be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county; and (3) be sent via email to residents of the county who chose to receive notice by email.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

Testimony From 2013 Regular Session.

PRO: This bill is about access and transparency of county government. Some counties do not have cable throughout the county where people can watch the county government meetings. This bill would provide county commissioners the opportunity to move the meeting and have regular business at that meeting. People could see the process, see the vote, and become part of the whole process. This bill is valuable to counties across the state, especially the very large counties and the geographically diverse counties. The House amended this bill to address some of the concern around the bill, including notice provisions and how this process could be used by the county legislative authority. This bill provides local county authorities with some flexibility to allow them to get out and be closer to the citizens that elected them. Citizens should have the opportunity to see their county legislative authority in action. This bill provides a county legislative authority with the ability to be open, accessible, and transparent.

Persons Testifying:

Persons Testifying From 2014 Regular Session.

PRO: Representative Appleton, prime sponsor; Brian Enslow, WA State Assn. of Counties; Tom McBride, Rob Gelder, Kitsap County.