

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5747

As Passed Senate, March 8, 2013

Title: An act relating to election of public hospital district boards of commissioners.

Brief Description: Concerning the election of public hospital district boards of commissioners.

Sponsors: Senator Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/18/13 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/08/13, 46-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Braun, Conway, Fraser and Rivers.

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: Public hospital districts are local government entities that may be created to provide health care facilities and services. Voters must approve a local ballot proposition to create a public hospital district. Since 1945, when they were authorized in state law, more than 50 public hospital districts have been created in Washington. Many provide facilities and services in rural areas. To finance operations, districts may levy property taxes, issue bonds, and charge user fees.

Public hospital districts are governed by three, five, or seven-member boards of commissioners. All voters in the entire public hospital district elect commissioners representing commissioner districts and at-large commissioners.

Cities may provide for election of each member of the city council by voters in districts, rather than by voters in the entire city, and approximately 20 have done so. Similarly, counties that have adopted home rule charters may provide for election of each member of the county legislative body by voters in districts, rather than by voters in the entire county.

Summary of Bill: The board of commissioners of a public hospital district with a population over 285,000, as determined by Office of Financial Management estimates may, by

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resolution, establish commissioner districts and provide that each board member will be nominated in a primary and elected in a general election solely by voters in the member's commissioner district, rather than by voters in the entire public hospital district.

Terms of commissioners serving in office at the time that the resolution is adopted may not be reduced. Subsequently elected commissioners must be elected from the commissioner districts in which they reside. One commissioner must be elected from each commissioner district, and no commissioner may be elected from a commissioner district in which another commissioner resides.

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: PRO: King County Public Hospital District #1 has a population over 285,000, much more populous than a state legislative district. This bill could reduce the amount of money, currently up to \$100,000, necessary to run a campaign in such a populous hospital district. If it were enacted, members could be elected to represent commissioner districts with populations of approximately 57,000. The bill, which grants appropriate discretion to districts, is a commonsense, good government reform measure. It could give citizens a stronger voice in district governance, providing greater direct democracy.

OTHER: A law applying to a specific district raises issues; within a few years, it could apply to King County Hospital District #2 – Evergreen Health, in Kirkland, which is also very populous and growing in population. Under this bill, voters could only vote for for one board member, rather than all members of the board.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Anthony Hemstad, Paul Joos, King County Public Hospital District #1 – Valley Medical Center; James Grossnickle, citizen.

OTHER: Jeff Mero, Assn. of WA Public Hospital Districts.