

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1013

As Amended by the Senate

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, Johnson, Hansen, Takko, Gregerson and Fey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/13/15, 1/15/15 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/15, 80-17.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/9/15, 45-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes county legislative authorities to hold regular meetings at alternate locations within the county if doing so would support greater citizen engagement in local government.
- Specifies that the authority to hold regular meetings at alternate locations within the county may be exercised only on an infrequent and irregular basis.
- Establishes specific notification requirements for regular meetings held at alternate locations within the county.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Takko, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Fitzgibbon, McBride and Peterson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin and Pike.

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.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Washington counties provide regional services to all residents within their jurisdiction, including administering elections and furnishing judicial services, and a broader array of services to residents in unincorporated areas.

County legislative authorities are required to hold regular meetings at the county seat to transact any business required or permitted by law. Although the term "regular meeting" is not defined in statutory provisions governing counties, the Municipal Research and Services Center defines "regular meeting" as one that is held according to a schedule, adopted as appropriate, by the applicable public governing body.

Contrary to the geographic limitations on regular meetings, county legislative authorities may hold special meetings (meetings that are not held according to an adopted schedule) at any location within the county if the agenda item or items are of unique interest or concern to the citizens of the area of the county in which the special meeting is to be held.

Summary of Bill:

County legislative authorities are authorized to hold regular meetings at alternate locations outside of the county seat, but within the county, if the legislative authority determines that holding a meeting at an alternate location would be in the interest of supporting greater citizen engagement in local government. This alternate location option 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 of the meeting. At a minimum, the notice must be: (1) posted on the county's website; (2) published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county; and (3) sent via electronic mail (e-mail) to residents of the county who have chosen to receive notice by e-mail.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

Limits the proposed frequency of regular meetings of a county legislative authority (legislative authority) that may be held at a location within the county, but outside of the county seat, to once per calendar quarter rather than on an infrequent basis. Requires the legislative authority to provide 30 or more days of notice, rather than 20 or more days of notice, for a meeting held outside of the county seat.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill, which is about civic education, has previously been before the Local Government Committee. Many rural places and residents do not have convenient access to county meetings or opportunities to provide input regarding county actions. This bill was previously adopted by the House of Representatives.

This is not a Kitsap County bill. The bill stems from ideas that were generated to lessen barriers to public participation with low or no costs. The bill is not intended to be a slippery slope to moving the county seat, but rather to reach out to persons disenfranchised from local government. The bill includes provisions requiring counties to provide ample notice for regular meetings held outside of the county seat. The seven charter counties may have some flexibility with holding meetings, and this bill will grant greater flexibility to all counties. County actions at special meetings are narrowly limited to only items on the agenda. This is a permissive bill; it will help counties with large geography that struggle with ways to engage citizens.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Appleton, prime sponsor; Robert Gelder, Kitsap County; and Laura Merrill, Washington State Association of Counties.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.