
Education Committee

HB 1941

Brief Description: Providing for a simple majority of voters voting to authorize school district bonds at general elections.

Sponsors: Representatives Gregerson, Muri, Santos, Orwall, Ryu, Hunter, Sells, Ormsby, Springer, Bergquist, Ortiz-Self, Kilduff, Moscoso, Peterson, Senn, Farrell, Hudgins, McBride, Fitzgibbon, Clibborn, Fey, Morris, Takko, Moeller, Wylie, Gregory, Walkinshaw, Riccelli, Hansen, Robinson, Kagi, Jinkins, Pettigrew, Lytton, Tharinger, Cody, Carlyle, Sawyer, Stanford, Goodman, Dunshee, Appleton, Tarleton, Van De Wege and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes school districts to issue general obligation bonds for capital purposes, make payments on those bonds through the levy of taxes, and exceed the statutory debt limit with approval by a simple majority of the voters, rather than approval by 60 percent of the voters, at a general election where the total number of voters is at least 40 percent of the total at the last preceding general election.
- Provides that the bill is void unless a Constitutional amendment to this effect is approved at the next general election.

Hearing Date: 2/16/15

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

The Washington State Constitution authorizes school districts to collect property tax revenues in excess of 1 percent of the assessed value of property in the district for capital or operating purposes and to assume excess debt when voters approve a levy or bond issue by certain margins. In order to issue general obligation bonds for capital purposes and make payments on those bonds through the levy of taxes, a school district must receive approval by 60 percent of the voters at an election where the total number of voters is at least 40 percent of the total at the

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last preceding general election. The Constitution also requires a 60 percent voter approval for a school district to incur debt exceeding 1.5 percent of the assessed value of property in the district. State statute imposes a lower threshold of .38 percent indebtedness for school districts and requires the 60 percent voter approval to exceed that threshold.

In 2007, the voters approved a Constitutional amendment allowing school districts to collect excess levies for purposes other than for general obligation bonds for capital purposes by a simple majority of the voters voting at an election for that purpose.

A joint resolution to change the Constitution must be approved by a two-thirds majority of both houses of the Legislature, followed by approval by a majority of the voters in the next general election.

Summary of Bill:

If the voters at the next general election approve an amendment to the state Constitution, school districts may issue general obligation bonds for capital purposes, make payments on those bonds through the levy of taxes, and exceed the statutory debt limit with approval by a simple majority of the voters voting at a general election for that purpose where the total number of votes is at least 40 percent of the total at the last preceding general election. Changes are made to state statutes to conform to these provisions.

If the Constitutional amendment is not approved, the bill is void in its entirety.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 2/10/15.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is void unless the corresponding Constitutional amendment is approved at the next general election.