

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1347

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Local Government, March 21, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to the creation of a countywide port district within a county containing no port districts.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the creation of a countywide port district within a county containing no port districts.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Riccelli, Holy and Ormsby).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/03/17, 81-16.

**Committee Activity:** Local Government: 3/16/17, 3/21/17 [DP].

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes a county with no port district to create a countywide port district by ballot proposition, and to elect the initial port commissioners at the next general election.
- Prohibits these port districts from levying taxes until after the election of port commissioners.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Short, Chair; Angel, Vice Chair; Takko, Ranking Minority Member; Palumbo and Sheldon.

**Staff:** Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

**Background:** Port Districts - in General. Port districts are municipal corporations with the authority to acquire, construct, maintain, operate, develop, and regulate harbor improvements, and transfer and terminal facilities for rail, water, air, and motor vehicles. Port districts may take up an entire single county or may be less than countywide.

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*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.*

Countywide District Formation. Countywide port districts may be created by a ballot proposition that is submitted directly to county voters for their approval or rejection if either: (1) the county legislative authority adopts a resolution to submit a ballot proposition; or (2) county voters sign a petition allowing a ballot proposition to be submitted. The number of signatures needed on the petition must be equal to at least 10 percent of the number of county voters who voted in the last general county election. The proposition must be placed on the ballot at the next general or special election, at which the initial port commissioners are also elected. A simple majority vote in favor is required for formation.

Less Than Countywide District Formation. Less than countywide port districts are formed in a similar manner to countywide port districts, though they are initiated solely by petition and have an added public hearing process. In a county with no port districts, a new less than countywide port district may elect its port commissioners at the next general election following the election authorizing the district's creation. This exception expires December 31, 2020.

**Summary of Bill:** A county with no port district may create a countywide port district by a ballot proposition submitted to voters authorizing the port district to be created. In these elections, all of the procedures to form a countywide port district must be followed, except that the initial port commissioners are not required to be elected at the same election as when the ballot proposition is submitted to voters. Rather, the initial commissioners may be elected at the next general election. This type of countywide port district may not levy taxes until after the election of port commissioners.

This provision expires on December 31, 2020.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: About 30 years ago, Spokane tried to create a port under existing statute, but the citizens running for the Port Commissioner seats were opposed to the port. By bifurcating the two processes, voters could have a clear say; authorizing the port in one election and electing commissioners in the next election. Port districts are effectively economic development districts, and Spokane would like to use the taxing authority to move forward economic development initiatives. In 2014, the Legislature passed the same split process for less than countywide port districts.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Marcus Riccelli, Prime Sponsor; Jim Hedrick, Greater Spokane Incorporated; Eric Johnson, WA Public Ports Assoc.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.