

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 5824

As Amended by House, February 28, 2024

Title: An act relating to the dissolution of libraries and library districts.

Brief Description: Concerning the dissolution of libraries and library districts.

Sponsors: Senators Hunt, Keiser, Kuderer, Lias and Nobles; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 1/09/24, 1/12/24 [DP, w/oRec].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 1/24/24, 49-0.

Passed House: 2/28/24, 90-5.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Increases the signature threshold for filing petitions to dissolve libraries from 100 taxpayers to 25 percent of eligible voters in the district.
- Increases the signature threshold for filing petitions to dissolve library districts from 10 percent of voters residing outside of incorporated cities or towns to 25 percent of eligible voters in the district.
- Expands voter eligibility to allow all qualified electors of a library district to participate in a vote on propositions for library district dissolution.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier and Fortunato.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: Library Dissolution. Under current law, public libraries, excluding regional, rural, intercounty, or island library district libraries, may be abolished in the same manner they were established: either by the legislative body of its own initiative, or upon the petition of 100 taxpayers from the district whereby the question is submitted to a vote and the library is established or dissolved upon a majority vote.

Library District Dissolution. After a library district has been in operation for three or more years it may be dissolved by a vote of all qualified electors residing outside of incorporated cities and towns. A proposition for dissolution is placed on the ballot if a petition by 10 percent or more of the qualified electors within the district is filed with the district board of trustees no less than 90 days prior to election. Island library districts must also be dissolved if a rural county library district serving all areas of the county, outside of incorporated cities and towns, is established.

Summary of Engrossed Bill: Library Dissolution. Libraries may be dissolved broadly through two processes. The first is dissolution by the legislative body by its own initiative. The second is a petition process whereby a petition must receive support from 25 percent or more of eligible voters and be filed with the board of trustees of the district no later than 90 days prior to the general election. If these steps are completed, the question of dissolution will be placed on the ballot and if the proposition receives a majority vote in favor of dissolution the library is dissolved.

Library District Dissolution. After a library district has been in operation for three or more years, it may be dissolved by a vote of all qualified electors. A petition for dissolution by 25 percent or more qualified voters residing in the library district must be filed with the board of trustees no later than 90 days prior to the general election. If this is achieved, the question of dissolution will be placed on the ballot and if the proposition receives a majority vote in favor of dissolution the library district is dissolved.

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: This bill will allow more people to participate in the elections that impact them. Raising the petition signature requirement ensures that the will of the voters is heard. Libraries bring vital resources to our communities.

OTHER: We should take a cautious approach to make sure we properly address the issue

without adding undue burden.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Alex Hur, Inatai Foundation; Elise Severe, Neighbors United for Progress; Steve Hobbs, Office of Secretary of State; Carolyn Logue, Washington Library Association.

OTHER: eric pratt.

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

EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

- Removes the authority for the legislative body of a county, city, town, or library district to independently dissolve a public library located within that county, city, town, or library district.