
SENATE BILL 5263

State of Washington

54th Legislature

1995 Regular Session

By Senators Haugen, Winsley, Sheldon and Long

Read first time 01/17/95. Referred to Committee on Government Operations.

1 AN ACT Relating to public utility district commissioners; amending
2 RCW 54.08.010, 54.08.060, 54.12.010, 54.40.040, and 54.40.060; adding
3 new section to chapter 54.12 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 54.40
4 RCW; and repealing RCW 54.40.010, 54.40.030, and 54.40.050.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 54.08.010 and 1985 c 469 s 55 are each amended to read
7 as follows:

8 At any general election held in an even-numbered year, the county
9 legislative authority of any county in this state may, or, on petition
10 of ten percent of the qualified electors of the county based on the
11 total vote cast in the last general county election held in an even-
12 numbered year, shall, by resolution, submit to the voters of the county
13 the proposition of creating a public utility district which shall be
14 coextensive with the limits of the county as now or hereafter
15 established. A form of petition for the creation of a public utility
16 district shall be submitted to the county auditor within ten months
17 prior to the election at which the proposition is to be submitted to
18 the voters. Petitions shall be filed with the county auditor not less
19 than four months before the election and the county auditor shall

1 within thirty days examine the signatures thereof and certify to the
2 sufficiency or insufficiency thereof. If the petition be found to be
3 insufficient, it shall be returned to the persons filing the same, who
4 may amend or add names thereto for ten days, when the same shall be
5 returned to the county auditor, who shall have an additional fifteen
6 days to examine the same and attach his certificate thereto. No person
7 having signed the petition shall be allowed to withdraw his name
8 therefrom after the filing of the same with the county auditor:
9 PROVIDED, That each signature shall be dated and that no signature
10 dated prior to the date on which the form of petition was submitted to
11 the county auditor shall be valid. Whenever the petition shall be
12 certified to as sufficient, the county auditor shall forthwith transmit
13 the same, together with his certificate of sufficiency attached
14 thereto, to the county legislative authority which shall submit the
15 proposition to the voters of the county at the next general election in
16 an even-numbered year occurring forty-five days after submission of the
17 proposition to the legislative authority.

18 If the election to form a public utility district is initiated by
19 petition, the petition shall state whether the public utility district
20 commissioners shall serve six-year or four-year terms. If the election
21 to form a public utility district is initiated solely by action of the
22 county legislative authority, the county legislative authority shall
23 state in the resolution calling for an election under this section
24 whether the public utility district commissioners shall serve six-year
25 or four-year terms.

26 The notice of the election shall state the boundaries of the
27 proposed public utility district; whether the public utility district
28 commissioners shall, except as otherwise required at the initial
29 election, serve six-year or four-year terms; and the object of such
30 election(~~and~~)). The notice shall in other respects conform to the
31 requirements of the general laws of the state of Washington, governing
32 the time and manner of holding elections. In submitting the question
33 to the voters for their approval or rejection, the proposition shall be
34 expressed on the ballot substantially in the following terms:

35 Public Utility District No. YES 1
36 Public Utility District No. NO 1

37 Any petition for the formation of a public utility district may
38 describe a less area than the entire county in which the petition is

1 filed, the boundaries of which shall follow the then existing precinct
2 boundaries and not divide any voting precinct; and in the event that
3 such a petition is filed the county legislative authority shall fix a
4 date for a hearing on such petition, and shall publish the petition,
5 without the signatures thereto appended, for two weeks prior to the
6 date of the hearing, together with a notice stating the time of the
7 meeting when the petition will be heard. The publication, and all
8 other publications required by this act, shall be in a newspaper of
9 general circulation in the county in which the district is situated.
10 The hearing on the petition may be adjourned from time to time, not
11 exceeding four weeks in all. If upon the final hearing the county
12 legislative authority shall find that any lands have been unjustly or
13 improperly included within the proposed public utility district and
14 will not be benefited by inclusion therein, it shall change and fix the
15 boundary lines in such manner as it shall deem reasonable and just and
16 conducive to the public welfare and convenience, and make and enter an
17 order establishing and defining the boundary lines of the proposed
18 public utility district: PROVIDED, That no lands shall be included
19 within the boundaries so fixed lying outside the boundaries described
20 in the petition, except upon the written request of the owners of those
21 lands. Thereafter the same procedure shall be followed as prescribed
22 in this chapter for the formation of a public utility district
23 including an entire county, except that the petition and election shall
24 be confined solely to the lesser public utility district.

25 No public utility district created after September 1, 1979, shall
26 include any other public utility district within its boundaries:
27 PROVIDED, That this paragraph shall not alter, amend, or modify
28 provisions of chapter 54.32 RCW.

29 **Sec. 2.** RCW 54.08.060 and 1994 c 223 s 55 are each amended to read
30 as follows:

31 (1) Whenever a proposition for the formation of a public utility
32 district is to be submitted to voters in any county, the county
33 legislative authority may by resolution call a special election, and at
34 the request of petitioners for the formation of such district contained
35 in the petition shall do so and shall provide for holding the same at
36 the earliest practicable time. If the boundaries of the proposed
37 district embrace an area less than the entire county, such election
38 shall be confined to the area so included. The notice of such election

1 shall state the boundaries of the proposed district; whether the public
2 utility district commissioners shall, except as otherwise required at
3 the initial election, serve six-year or four-year terms; and the object
4 of such election; in other respects, such election shall be held and
5 called in the same manner as provided by law for the holding and
6 calling of general elections: PROVIDED, That notice thereof shall be
7 given for not less than ten days nor more than thirty days prior to
8 such special election. In submitting the proposition to the voters for
9 their approval or rejection, such proposition shall be expressed on the
10 ballots in substantially the following terms:

11 Public Utility District No. YES
12 Public Utility District No. NO

13 At the same special election on the proposition to form a public
14 utility district, there shall also be an election for three public
15 utility district commissioners. However, the election of such
16 commissioners shall be null and void if the proposition to form the
17 public utility district does not receive approval by a majority of the
18 voters voting on the proposition. No primary shall be held. A special
19 filing period shall be opened as provided in RCW 29.15.170 and
20 29.15.180. The person receiving the greatest number of votes for the
21 commissioner of each commissioner district shall be elected as the
22 commissioner of that district. Commissioner districts shall be
23 established as provided in RCW 54.12.010.

24 (2)(a) The terms of the initial commissioners, in public utility
25 districts in which commissioners shall be subsequently elected to six-
26 year terms, shall be staggered as follows: ((+1)) (i) The person who
27 is elected receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected to
28 a six-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered
29 year or a five-year term if the election is held in an odd-numbered
30 year; ((+2)) (ii) the person who is elected receiving the next
31 greatest number of votes shall be elected to a four-year term of office
32 if the election is held in an even-numbered year or a three-year term
33 of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year; and ((+3))
34 (iii) the other person who is elected shall be elected to a two-year
35 term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year or a
36 one-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered
37 year.

1 (b) The terms of the initial commissioners, in public utility
2 districts in which commissioners shall be subsequently elected to four-
3 year terms, shall be staggered as follows: (i) The two persons who are
4 elected receiving the greatest and next greatest number of votes shall
5 be elected to four-year terms of office if the election is held in an
6 even-numbered year or three-year terms if the election is held in an
7 odd-numbered year; (ii) the other person who is elected shall be
8 elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an
9 even-numbered year or a one-year term of office if the election is held
10 in an odd-numbered year.

11 The commissioners first to be elected at such special election
12 shall assume office immediately when they are elected and qualified,
13 but the length of their terms of office shall be calculated from the
14 first day in January in the year following their elections.

15 The term "general election" as used herein means biennial general
16 elections at which state and county officers in a noncharter county are
17 elected.

18 **Sec. 3.** RCW 54.12.010 and 1994 c 223 s 56 are each amended to read
19 as follows:

20 A public utility district that is created as provided in RCW
21 54.08.010 shall be a municipal corporation of the state of Washington,
22 and the name of such public utility district shall be Public Utility
23 District No. of County.

24 The powers of the public utility district shall be exercised
25 through a commission consisting of three members in three commissioner
26 districts, and five members in five commissioner districts.

27 When the public utility district is county-wide and the county has
28 three county legislative authority districts, then, at the first
29 election of commissioners and until any change shall have been made in
30 the boundaries of public utility district commissioner districts, one
31 public utility district commissioner shall be chosen from each of the
32 three county legislative authority districts. When the public utility
33 district comprises only a portion of the county, with boundaries
34 established in accordance with chapter 54.08 RCW, or when the public
35 utility district is county-wide and the county does not have three
36 county legislative authority districts, three public utility district
37 commissioner districts, numbered consecutively, each with approximately
38 equal population and following precinct lines, as far as practicable,

1 shall be described in the petition for the formation of the public
2 utility district, which shall be subject to appropriate change by the
3 county legislative authority if and when it changes the boundaries of
4 the proposed public utility district, and one commissioner shall be
5 elected as a commissioner of each of the public utility district
6 commissioner districts. Commissioner districts shall be used as
7 follows: (1) Only a registered voter who resides in a commissioner
8 district may be a candidate for, or hold office as, a commissioner of
9 the commissioner district; and (2) only voters of a commissioner
10 district may vote at a primary to nominate candidates for a
11 commissioner of the commissioner district. Voters of the entire public
12 utility district may vote at a general election to elect a person as a
13 commissioner of the commissioner district.

14 The term of office of each public utility district commissioner
15 other than the commissioners at large shall be either six or four
16 years, as determined at the time of formation of the district or as
17 changed pursuant to section 4 of this act, and the term of each
18 commissioner at large shall be four years. Each term shall be computed
19 in accordance with RCW 29.04.170 following the commissioner's election.

20 All public utility district commissioners shall hold office until
21 their successors shall have been elected and have qualified and assume
22 office in accordance with RCW 29.04.170.

23 A vacancy in the office of public utility district commissioner
24 shall occur as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW or by nonattendance at
25 meetings of the public utility district commission for a period of
26 sixty days unless excused by the public utility district commission.
27 Vacancies on a board of public utility district commissioners shall be
28 filled as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW.

29 The boundaries of the public utility district commissioner
30 districts may be changed only by the public utility district
31 commission, and shall be examined every ten years to determine
32 substantial equality of population in accordance with chapter 29.70
33 RCW, but the boundaries shall not be changed oftener than once in four
34 years, and only when all members of the commission are present.
35 Whenever territory is added to a public utility district under RCW
36 54.04.035, the boundaries of the public utility commissioner districts
37 shall be changed to include such additional territory. The proposed
38 change of the boundaries of the public utility district commissioner
39 district must be made by resolution and after public hearing. Notice

1 of the time of a public hearing thereon shall be published for two
2 weeks prior thereto. Upon a referendum petition signed by ten percent
3 of the qualified voters of the public utility district being filed with
4 the county auditor, the county legislative authority shall submit such
5 proposed change of boundaries to the voters of the public utility
6 district for their approval or rejection. Such petition must be filed
7 within ninety days after the adoption of resolution of the proposed
8 action. The validity of the petition shall be governed by the
9 provisions of chapter 54.08 RCW.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 54.12 RCW
11 to read as follows:

12 In any public utility district in which commissioners serve six-
13 year terms, a ballot proposition shall be submitted to the voters of
14 the district authorizing a change of all six-year terms to four-year
15 terms whenever the public utility district commission adopts a
16 resolution proposing the change in terms of office or petition
17 proposing such a change in terms of office has been submitted to the
18 county auditor of the county in which the public utility district is
19 located that has been signed by voters of the public utility district
20 at least equal in number to ten percent of the number of voters in the
21 public utility district who voted at the last general election. The
22 ballot proposition shall be submitted at the next general or special
23 election occurring sixty or more days after the petition was submitted
24 or resolution was adopted.

25 If the proposition to change the terms of office from six to four
26 years is approved by a majority of the voters voting on the
27 proposition, all commissioners serving six-year terms at the time of
28 the election on the proposition and any commissioner subsequently
29 appointed or elected to fill a vacancy in a six-year term of a
30 commissioner serving at the time of the election on the proposition,
31 shall complete the six-year term. Thereafter, successor commissioners
32 shall be elected to four-year terms.

33 **Sec. 5.** RCW 54.40.040 and 1994 c 223 s 58 are each amended to read
34 as follows:

35 ~~((A)) In any public utility district that ((has or had a license
36 from the federal power commission to construct a hydroelectric project
37 of an estimated cost of more than two hundred fifty million dollars,~~

1 registered voter who resides in an at-large district may be a candidate
2 for or hold office as a commissioner of that district; and (2) only
3 voters of an at-large district may vote at a primary to nominate
4 candidates for the position of at-large commissioner from that
5 district. Voters of the entire public utility district may vote at a
6 general election to elect a person as commissioner for the at-large
7 district.

8 NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. A new section is added to chapter 54.40 RCW
9 to read as follows:

10 Petitions or resolutions calling for an election to change the
11 terms of office of public utility district commissioners and to
12 increase the number of commissioners from three to five pursuant to
13 section 4 of this act and RCW 54.40.040, may be consolidated. When
14 such a consolidated petition is certified or consolidated resolution is
15 adopted, the questions of changing the terms of office of public
16 utility district commissioners and of increasing the number of
17 commissioners shall be presented separately on the election ballot and
18 may be approved or disapproved independently of each other.

19 NEW SECTION. Sec. 8. The following acts or parts of acts are each
20 repealed:

21 (1) RCW 54.40.010 and 1994 c 223 s 57, 1977 ex.s. c 36 s 1, & 1959
22 c 265 s 2;

23 (2) RCW 54.40.030 and 1977 ex.s. c 36 s 3 & 1959 c 265 s 4; and

24 (3) RCW 54.40.050 and 1994 c 223 s 59, 1977 ex.s. c 36 s 5, & 1959
25 c 265 s 6.

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