

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2721

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to levy lid lifts for fire protection districts.

Brief Description: Modifying levy lid lifts for fire protection districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Ericks, Haler, Roberts, Morris, Takko, B. Sullivan, Hasegawa, Moeller, Simpson, Sells, Green, Ormsby, Springer and Priest.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/25/06, 2/1/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows ballot propositions authorizing levies in excess of growth rate limitations to set a maximum regular levy dollar rate to be levied each year by a fire protection district for a maximum of six consecutive years.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Simpson, Chair; Clibborn, Vice Chair; B. Sullivan, Takko and Woods.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Schindler, Ranking Minority Member and Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Fire protection districts

Fire protection districts are generally charged with providing fire prevention, suppression, and emergency medical services to protect life and property within jurisdictional boundaries.

Taxing Districts - Limitations and Voter Authorizations

Taxing districts, including fire protection districts, are authorized to levy a certain rate each year against the assessed value of taxable property of the district. Although these "regular" local levies do not require voter approval, voters may approve the imposition of additional taxes by the district.

Imposition rate and revenue limitations are established in law. Generally, the aggregate dollar rate total of most local levies cannot exceed a statutory limit. Fire protection districts, however, are granted exemptions from certain limitations. Additionally, except as otherwise provided, the growth rate of taxing district regular levy revenues generally may not exceed an annual 1 percent limit.

Regular property taxes in excess of the 1 percent growth rate limitations on revenue may be levied by a taxing district if approved by district voters. This approval is referred to as a levy lid lift. An election to approve a lid lift must be held 12 or fewer months prior to the date on which the proposed levy is to be made. An exception to this requirement, allowing counties, cities, and towns to seek lid lifts for up to six consecutive years, was enacted in 2003.

Ballot propositions authorizing the levying of taxes in excess of growth rate limitations may establish certain provisions, including:

- limiting the period and/or purpose for which the increased levy is to be made;
- authorizing annual increases in levies for cities, counties, or towns for a maximum of six consecutive years, subject to provisions governing the increases and the subsequent use of funds; and
- setting the levy at a rate less than the maximum rate allowed for the district.

Summary of Bill:

Ballot propositions authorizing the levying of taxes in excess of growth rate limitations may set a maximum regular levy dollar rate to be levied every year by a fire protection district for up to six consecutive years.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Similar legislation addressing the issue of levy lid lifts for fire protection districts was introduced in previous sessions. Most people do not realize that public safety funding for police is derived from a variety of sources, including property taxes, sales taxes, and utility taxes. Fire districts, however, are limited to a property-tax based funding system. Fire districts are required to seek annual voter approvals for levy lid lifts. This requirement is burdensome and results in increased costs to districts. This bill authorizes districts to seek voter approvals for set amounts for up to six years. Citizens are supportive of this proposal and want a fire district levy lid lift that will last for multiple years.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ericks, prime sponsor; Al Church, Washington Fire Chiefs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.