

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 1477

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Education, March 31, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to school district organization.

**Brief Description:** Revising school district organization provisions.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Haigh, Bush, Talcott, Linville, Santos and Edmonds; by request of Board of Education).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Education: 3/29/99, 3/31/99 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Finkbeiner, Goings, Hochstatter, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Sellar and Swecker.

**Staff:** Natalie Adams (786-7444)

**Background:** The Legislature enacted the city or town districts statute in 1909, primarily to ensure that each city or town is served by a single school district. Over the years, the Legislature has added and amended provisions regarding school district boundaries.

Regional committees in each of the nine educational service districts (ESD) govern school district boundary changes. A majority of the voters in the affected district or the school board may petition for a boundary change. The regional committees may consider a number of factors in deciding whether or not to make a boundary change recommendation. If the regional committee recommends that a boundary change should occur, the matter is forwarded to the State Board of Education (SBE), which makes the final boundary decision. If the committee does not make a recommendation, the boundary change proposal is never heard.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** The city or town district statute is repealed and the current provisions for changing school district boundaries are significantly modified.

10 percent of the voters in the affected district or the school board may petition for a boundary change. When a petition is submitted, the affected districts must negotiate to attempt to agree on the boundary change. A mediation provision allows the districts to seek the assistance of a mediator. If the districts reach agreement, the ESD implements the boundary change. If the districts fail to agree, the petition is forwarded to the regional committee.

The regional committee must consider all factors when making a boundary change decision. The list of factors has been revised and updated. The regional committee makes final decisions regarding boundary changes. If the regional committee approves a boundary change, the affected districts may appeal the final decision to the SBE. However, the SBE has limited jurisdiction, and may only require a rehearing if it finds that the regional committee did not follow the rules in making its decision or if it finds that the decision of the regional committee is arbitrary and capricious. Any final decision may be submitted for judicial review.

To the extent funds are appropriated, the regional committees, SBE members, ESD superintendents and local school district superintendents and boards of directors receive annual training.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** Provisions for reimbursement of costs were deleted. The provision regarding annual training is conditioned to the extent funds are appropriated.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Many people were involved in the changes to this bill. We believe that the final product is a good bill. Some of us spoke against or with concern to the original version of the bill. We are now in support of the bill because it covers the issues that needed to be addressed, it keeps decision making at the local level, it provides training and funding, and it applies equally to all of the districts. We urge you to pass the bill without any changes.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Representative Kathryn M. Haigh, prime sponsor; Larry Davis, State Board of Education; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association; John Davis, Clover Park School Board; Kathy Rohrer, ESD 112 Vancouver.