



Spokane County

OFFICE OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

Josh Kerns, 1st District | Mary Kuney 2nd District | Al French, 3rd District

March 6, 2018

REGULAR MAIL AND FACSIMILE

(360) 753-4410

**Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002**

Re: *Substitute House Bill 2887 as Amended by the Senate ("SHB 2887")
Spokane County Five (5) Commissioner Bill*

Dear Governor Inslee:

The purpose of this correspondence is for the Spokane County Board of County Commissioners ("Board") to share with you the reasons why we are recommending that you veto SHB 2887. This special legislation, would require an increase from three (3) to five (5) county commissioners in all non-charter counties having a population of 400,000 or more, to be elected by district in both the primary and the general elections, effective as of 2022. For all practical purposes, the only county affected by this special legislation is Spokane County in as much as all other counties having a population of 400,000 or more, are Home Rule Counties established under Article XI, § 4 of the Washington State Constitution.

We believe SHB 2887 should be vetoed for the following reasons:

1. On November 3, 2015, there was a special election held in Spokane County to increase the number of county commissioners from three (3) to five (5). The voters, by an overwhelming margin voted against the ballot measure. (54.25% (63,308) - No; 45.7% (53,833) – Yes). Records indicate that the ballot measure failed in every legislative district in Spokane County. If the electorate in Spokane County voted against increasing the number of county commissioner from three (3) to five (5), why would the legislature and Governor, ignore the will of the voters, and pass special legislation, in effect mandating what the voters previously voted against? We have enclosed a copy of the Tuesday, November 3, 2015, General Election Ballot Proposition results. Moreover, if the electorate in Spokane County wanted to increase the number of county commissioners from (3) to (5), to be elected in both the primary and general election from commissioner districts, they can initiate this form of government under the Home Rule process.
2. In conjunction with the November 3, 2015, special election to increase the number of county commissioners from three (3) to five (5), published facts indicated that it would cost an estimated \$500,000 annually to implement. Recently, County public records advised that increasing the county commissioners from three (3) to five (5) would cost \$525,000 annually with a onetime expenditure of \$500,000 for offices, equipment, and related costs. The cost of implementing the legislation are very significant to Spokane County. In 2017, public hearings held by the Board of County Commissioners in conjunction with adopting their 2018 budget were advised of a \$9.4 million dollar deficient. This deficient was addressed by cuts in general county services and a shift of banked road

capacity. Implementing the proposed legislation, without an accompanying budget appropriation, would require Spokane County to reduce services such as public safety.

3. SHB 2887 makes Spokane County the only county in the State where a County Redistricting Committee is controlled by the Washington State Legislature, not locally. Some might argue that having a Redistricting Committee controlled by the Washington State Legislature runs contrary to the concept that the best government is local.
4. SHB 2887 is only applicable to non-charter code counties having a population of more than 400,000. Spokane County is the only county presently having a population of more than 400,000, which is not a charter county. There has been some discussion, given the limited effect of this special legislation on one county, that it runs afoul of certain Washington State Constitutional provisions. Given that SHB 2887 effects elected positions, it should be vetoed unless it is clear that it will withstand any constitutional challenge(s).
5. Under the present form of Spokane County government, voters get to vote in the general election on all three (3) county commissioners who have the ability, among other matters, to raise taxes as well as reduce county services. Under SHB 2887, voters would not have the ability to vote on all five (5) county commissioners in the general election, but only the one (1) county commissioner within whose district they reside. This has the effect of diminishing their voter representation from 100% under the present form of Spokane County government to 20% under the form of county government set forth under SHB 2887.

The Board was very impressed with your veto of the SHB 6617 which would have allowed Legislature to refuse to release some records otherwise covered by the state Public Records Act. Clearly the reported 12,000 emails and the 6,000 phone calls from the public had a bearing upon your veto of the SHB 6617. We would urge you to veto SHB 2887 and in so doing recognize the voters' decision in the November 3, 2015 General Election wherein 63,308 voted against increasing the number of county commissioners from three (3) to five (5).

The Board has taken formal action to sign this correspondence at an Open Public Meeting. Additionally, the Board has continued this item for the remainder of the work week in the event you would like to further discuss our request that you veto SHB 2887. The Board can be reached at (509) 477-2265.

Very truly yours,

		
JOSH KERNS, Chair	MARY E. KUNEY, Vice Chair	AL FRENCH, Commissioner

Enclosure (2015 Election Results for 5 Commissioner Initiative)

cc: Drew Shirk, Governor's Legislative Director (drew.shirk@gove.wa.gov);
Angie Adams, Executive Assistant, (angie.adams@gove.wa.gov)

**2015 Election Results for 5 Commissioner Ballot Measure
By District and By City**

District	Yes	No
Leg District 3	12,246	14,926
Leg District 4	14,832	18,728
Leg District 6'	18,114	20,234
Leg District 7	6,792	7,824
Leg District 9	1,267	1,463
City of Spokane	22,744	26,790
City of Spokane Valley	8,439	10,833
City of Liberty Lake	1,107	1,101
City of Cheney	856	737
TOTAL:	53,833	63,308