

HB 3687 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 6/18, 6/24

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure establishes that a simple majority vote is required to adopt, amend, revise, or repeal a county charter, or adopt, amend, revise, repeal, or surrender a city charter. It also specifies that a county or city may amend its charter to require a supermajority or double majority vote, or other heightened vote requirement, for measures imposing or increasing fees, taxes, assessments, fines, penalties, charges, or any other revenue-generating mechanisms. The measure takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 1906, the voters of Oregon adopted a constitutional amendment that granted the people the right to draft and amend their own municipal charters, independent of special legislative approval (Article XI, section 2). Current law allows a city council to refer and for the citizens of a city to initiate municipal measures or charter amendments following the statutory initiative procedures for city measures, unless the city charter or ordinance provides otherwise.

A 1958 amendment to the Oregon Constitution reserved to the voters of Oregon counties the right to adopt charters prescribing how their county governments should be organized, what powers they should have, and what procedure they should follow in administering county affairs. ORS 203.710 to 203.770 provides the statutory framework for county home rule in Oregon, including allowing county electors to adopt, amend, revise, or repeal a county charter by majority vote at election.

Since 1958, nine counties have adopted “home rule” charters, wherein voters have the power to adopt and amend their own county government organization. Lane and Washington counties were the first to adopt “home rule” in 1962, followed by Hood River (1964), Multnomah (1967), Benton (1972), Jackson (1978), Josephine (1980), Clatsop (1988) and Umatilla (1993) counties.