

# Legislative Analysis

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## NUMBER OF COMMISSIONERS IN COUNTIES OVER 600,000

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**House Bill 5113 as introduced**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Jerry O. Kooiman**

**House Bill 5114 (Substitute H-1)**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Michael Sak**

**Committee: Local Government and Urban Policy**  
**First Analysis (3-18-04)**

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** The bill would require that a county with a population between 600,000 and one million have between 19 and 35 county commissioners. Currently such a county must have between 25 and 35 commissioners.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The bill would have no impact on state or local revenues.

### **THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

In Michigan the number of members serving on a county board of commissioners is set by law, based upon the number of people in a county. Generally, the larger a county's population, the more commissioners it has. For example, counties having a population of less than 5,001 cannot have more than seven commissioners. In contrast, the counties in the state having a population of 600,000 or more must have a county commission of between 25 and 35 members.

Currently, Kent County has a population of less than 600,000 and a county commission of 19 members. At the next decennial census, demographers expect Kent County's population to push past the 600,000 threshold, which would require the county board of commissioners to increase in size from 19 to 25 members. The county board of commissioners does not wish to increase the number of elected officials serving on commission, believing that its current 19-member board serves the county's citizens well.

In order to allow Kent County to retain its current number of county commissioners, legislation has been introduced that would add more population categories, and thus more flexibility, to the law.

### **THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:**

The bills would amend two acts dealing with county boards of commissioners to provide that a county board of commissioners in a county with a population of over 600,000 could have up to 35 members. However, a county with a population between 600,000 and one million would be subject to a minimum of 19 commissioners, and a county with a

population of more than one million would be subject to a minimum of 25 commissioners. Currently, both acts require such counties to have 25 to 35 commissioners. House Bill 5113 would amend Public Act 293 of 1966 (MCL 45.204), which deals with charter counties. House Bill 5114 would amend Public Act 261 of 1966 (MCL 46.402), which deals with the apportionment of county boards of commissioners.

The provisions regarding the number of commissioners in smaller counties would remain unchanged. They are as follows: for a county with a population under 5,000, not more than seven; for a county of 5,001 to 10,000, not more than 10 (or 11 for a charter county); for a county of 10,001 to 50,000, not more than 15; and for a county of 50,001 to 600,000, not more than 21.

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

In order to carry on the business of local government efficiently, the Kent County Board of Commissioners wishes to retain its current size—19 commissioners—despite the fact that the county's population is growing. At the next decennial census, current demographic trends indicate that Kent County will have more than 600,000 people. This proposed legislation would change the laws that require a county whose population exceeds 600,000 people to have at least 25 people on the board of commissioners. In order to increase the size of the county commission, the county would have to add new voting districts, thereby allowing for the election of more county commissioners. If the size of the government were to grow in this manner, it would cost taxpayers more money to support their county government. This bill allows the size of the county government in Kent County to remain the same, avoiding both the additional costs and reorganizational uncertainty.

#### ***Against:***

A larger county commission would allow the growing population easier access to elected officials, should the electors in the county need services from the county government.

### ***POSITIONS:***

The Michigan Association of Counties supports House Bill 5113, and also House Bill 5114 as amended. (3-16-04)

The Kent County Board of Commissioners supports the bill. (3-16-04)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.