

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5150

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations & Elections, February 18, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to providing for the election of library trustees.

**Brief Description:** Providing for the election of library trustees.

**Sponsors:** Senators Benton, Roach and Stevens.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 1/29/03, 2/18/03 [DPS, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5150 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Stevens, Vice Chair; McCaslin and Reardon.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Kastama.

**Staff:** Diane Smith (786-7410)

**Background:** Public libraries may be established by cities, towns or counties or groups thereof, in the case of regional libraries. Public libraries may also be established by a variety of special purpose districts. All libraries are managed by a board of trustees of either five or seven members. The trustees are appointed by the legislative authority of the local governmental entity that established them. The trustees must submit an annual budget to the legislative authority so that the property tax levy that supports the public libraries may be levied.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The appointing authority of a library district or the legislative body, as appropriate, may by ordinance, or the citizens may by petition of 10 percent of the voters of the district, city or town, as appropriate, put the question to the voters whether the library trustees should be elected. The term of office of an elected trustee is four years.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The substitute bill does not require election of trustees. The question of whether to elect trustees may be put to the voters.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** There is a public outcry about unresponsive library boards. The citizens are frustrated. There is no fiscal accountability under the current appointed board system. The salaries of library directors making \$116,000 per year shows the lack of fiscal accountability. The cost of the election should not dictate the decision. The total lack of responsiveness by trustees is shown in their ignoring petitions and incidents in the library.

**Testimony Against:** The current system works. Adding another layer of voting is cumbersome, awkward, and expensive. The current system allows for balance of age and gender on the board. The bill would actually hurt library governance. Representation would favor populated areas. The budget process already is public and completely visible and the elected officials already do determine what money goes to the library.

**Testified:** Mark Nussy, Trustee, Everett Library (con); Larry O'Donnell, Trustee, Everett Library (con); Thelma Kruse, Timberland Regional Library (con); Amory Peck, Whatcom County Library District (con); Heidi Borton (pro); Edna J. Fund (pro); Gene W. Weaver (pro); Ken Bragg, (pro); Margaret Tweet, SAFE (pro).