

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5556

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As of February 14, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to statewide nonpartisan offices.

**Brief Description:** Making the state treasurer a nonpartisan office.

**Sponsors:** Senators Shin, McCaslin, Fairley, Kline and Swecker; by request of State Treasurer.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/13/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

**Background:** The duties of the State Treasurer include disbursing the public monies, accounting for public monies in accordance with state law, managing the investment of state funds, and carrying out other duties as prescribed by the Constitution and statute.

The Office of the State Treasurer is a partisan office.

**Summary of Bill:** The Office of the State Treasurer is a nonpartisan office.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The State Treasurer has not had truly partisan issues to deal with during his time in office. Managing the state's money should never be a partisan issue. The State Treasurer should be guided by the law, principles of public service, and ethics, not political concerns. Partisan politics should never enter into the State Treasurer concerns when dealing with the state's financial management. Politics plays a part in everyday life, and certainly plays a part when you hold state office, but that is different from partisan politics playing a part. If the job of State Treasurer is not partisan, why should the election be partisan? It is important to serve as a public official, not a partisan official. The most important qualification for the job of State Treasurer should be a strong finance background, not political aspirations.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The Office of State Treasurer should be administered in an objective, non partisan manner. Just because an office is non partisan, it does not mandate that the campaign needs to be non partisan. Nothing stops either party from endorsing a candidate they believe in.

CON: Any office that sets policy is political by nature. If this bill passes it will decrease competition for the office. The incumbent will run unopposed in the future. How can a newcomer challenge an incumbent without the support of a major political party? The money, the organization, the outreach are beyond what most new candidates can pull together without party support. This bill will create incumbent entrenchment. The majority of non partisan races run with little competition because it is so difficult to raise the money and get your name out. A statewide non partisan race would be very difficult if not impossible.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Don Whiting, Washington State Grange; Mike Murphy, State Treasurer.

CON: Kelly Wright, 38th District Democrats.