

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1949

As Passed House:
February 13, 2010

Title: An act relating to appointing student members on the board of trustees for community colleges.

Brief Description: Allowing appointment of student members on the boards of trustees of community colleges.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Lias, Sells, Hasegawa, Upthegrove, Quall, Conway, Simpson and Ormsby).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/26/10, 1/29/10 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/13/10, 74-14.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows every community and technical college district Board of Trustees (Board) to choose, by majority vote, to have a sixth position on the Board, such position to be filled by a student.
- Requires the Governor to select each student member from a list of candidates submitted by the associated student governments, or their equivalent, of each district.
- Provides for a one-year term of office for student members of the Boards.
- Requires student members to excuse themselves from participation or voting on matters relating to the hiring, discipline, or tenure of faculty and personnel.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Driscoll, Haler, Hasegawa and White.

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.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel.

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

Washington is divided into 30 community and technical college districts. Each district has a Board of Trustees (Board) composed of five trustees appointed by the Governor. In making appointments to the Boards, the Governor must give consideration to geographical diversity and representation by labor, business, women, and racial and ethnic minorities. The Boards for districts containing a technical college must include at least one member from business and one member from labor. Trustees serve five-year terms.

Districts in Seattle, Spokane, and Pierce counties include more than one community college. The Seattle Community College district includes North Seattle Community College, Seattle Central Community College, and South Seattle Community College. The Community Colleges of Spokane district includes Spokane Falls Community College and Spokane Community College.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Boards for each of Washington's community and technical college districts may, by majority vote, choose to expand the Board for that district to six in order to seat a student member on the Board. In the event that a district's Board votes to authorize this student position, the Governor selects the student member from a list of three to five candidates submitted by the associated student governments, or their equivalent, of that district.

The student selected must be a full-time student in good standing in that district at the time of appointment. A student member serves for a term of one year, or until a successor is appointed, whichever is later. The student member must excuse himself or herself from participation or voting on matters relating to the hiring, discipline, or tenure of faculty members and personnel.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on January 29, 2010.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Student participation on a Board can prove to be a great experience for everyone, including the other Board members. The four-year institutions have already done this and shown that it works. Making this permissive and allowing each Board to decide makes sense. This will allow for immediate student feedback on all of the issues. Providing that this is a one-year, rather than a five-year, position makes it more workable for students.

Putting student representation on these Boards has been the top issue for community and technical college students for the last three years. This will be a win-win for everyone. A student will represent the whole campus, and not just that student's little group. This will be only one of six votes. In this way, the Boards will be enriched. The current trustees do not represent all persons because none are current students. Student Board members at the four-year institutions have demonstrated that they can check their hats at the door and represent everyone, not just students. This is a permissive model and all of the districts do not have to do this. Putting student representation on the Board reinforces the basic, noncontroversial concept of representation. Students in governance positions tend to stay longer at school. Four-year students support allowing the two-year schools to have student representation. The learning curve should not be a problem, since students are quick learners.

(With concerns) The students are not all in support of this but, instead, are very divided. There are other issues that should take priority right now such as tuition and financial aid. While this is permissive, the fact that some districts choose not to have a student representative on the Board may engender bad feelings. While I cannot stand for it, I will not stand against it.

(Opposed) We oppose the bill but want to make clear that we do not oppose our students. We value them tremendously. Trustees represent all of the citizens and cannot represent just one group or another. A limited term of one year is not enough time to learn the role of trustee. For those districts with more than one campus it will be difficult to choose the student. Many of the issues addressed by Boards have to do with administration and personnel. Surveys at the colleges in the district reveal that the students already participate. They just do not vote. The fact that Boards are composed of just five members is one of the reasons these Boards are successful.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Liias, prime sponsor; Joseph Root and Marcus Sweetser, Bellevue Community College/Washington Student Association; Blair Anundson, Washington Public Interest Research Group; Jacob Peltier, Bellevue Community College; Maggie Wilkens, League of Education Voters; Jamie Marine, Western Washington University/Washington Student Association; and Jono Hanks, University of Washington/Washington Student Association.

(With concerns) Danielle Way, Whatcom Community College.

(Opposed) Debra Lisser, Trustee Association - Skagit Valley College; and Pete Crane, Olympic College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.