

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6472

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR, FEBRUARY 7, 1992

Brief Description: Providing for changes to the Washington Technology Center.

SPONSORS: Senators Bluechel, Gaspard, McDonald, Matson and Cantu

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6472 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Matson, Chairman; Anderson, Vice Chairman; Bluechel, McMullen, Moore, Murray, and Skratek.

Staff: Traci Anderson (786-7452)

Hearing Dates: February 6, 1992; February 7, 1992

BACKGROUND:

In 1983, the Legislature created the Washington Technology Center (WTC) to form a university-industry-government partnership to conduct research that has a greater likelihood of being commercially applicable than traditional research conducted solely by a university.

The WTC is headquartered at the University of Washington. Statutorily, the Board of Regents of the University of Washington (UW) has the ultimate responsibility for the administration of the WTC. However, much of the responsibility for the administration of the WTC has been delegated to the Board of Directors of the WTC and the Executive Director of the WTC. The WTC Board is appointed by the UW Board of Regents. It consists of 14 business representatives and 11 university representatives.

State funding for the WTC is administered by the Department of Trade and Economic Development. Since its inception, the WTC has received approximately \$47 million from the state.

The Department of Trade and Economic Development, as directed by the Legislature, recently completed an assessment of the WTC. This evaluation, completed by Battelle, concludes that the WTC is a viable organization but identifies a number of areas in need of improvement, such as the overall mission and goals of the WTC, the governance and administration of the WTC, and the level of involvement and support by industry in the WTC. The report provides a number of recommendations for improving the operation of the WTC, including the following: the WTC must develop a strategic plan that crafts a vision for the WTC; the WTC must give increased emphasis to technology commercialization and transfer; the WTC must respond to its

mandate for education and training; the WTC operations and organization must be refined; the WTC must increase the involvement and support of industry.

SUMMARY:

The enabling legislation creating the Washington Technology Center (WTC) is modified.

The mission of the WTC is to perform research and to help commercialize research which benefits the intermediate and long-term economic vitality of the state of Washington. In addition, the WTC is to develop and strengthen university-industry relationships through conducting research that primarily benefits Washington-based companies.

The WTC is administered by the Board of Directors of the WTC. The members of the board consist of 14 industry representatives, nine university representatives, the Executive Director of the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute, the UW Provost, and the Director of the Department of Trade and Economic Development. The board members are appointed by the Governor based on the recommendations of the existing board of the WTC, the research universities and the high technology industry.

The University of Washington and Washington State University provide the staff, faculty and facilities required to support the operation of the WTC.

Professors involved in research at the WTC are credited for their participation in projects at the WTC when these individuals are considered for promotion, salary adjustments, and tenure. Patent work receives the same consideration as publishing in academic or professional journals.

The Department of Trade and Economic Development contracts with and provides guidance to the WTC regarding the expenditure of state appropriated funds.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The language directing universities to consider a professor's involvement in research projects at the WTC when making salary adjustments, promotion or tenure decisions is stricken.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

This legislation would help to correct the problems which have occurred in the administration and operation of the WTC during the last eight years.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Senator Alan Bluechel, prime sponsor; Paul Isaki, Director, Dept. of Trade and Economic Development; Barbara Kommer, Board of Directors, Washington Technology Center; Bob Edie, University of Washington; Larry Ganders, WSU