

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1719

As Reported By House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to the citizens' commission on salaries for elected officials.

Brief Description: Changing the citizens' commission on salaries for elected officials.

Sponsors: Representatives Anderson, Reams, R. Fisher, King, Pruitt, Roland, Wolfe, Lemmon and Ogden.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 25, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Conway; King; and Pruitt.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Campbell.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background: In 1986, the voters approved Amendment 78 to the state's constitution. The amendment authorizes an independent commission, created by the Legislature, to set the salaries of state elected officials, including superior court judges, and district court judges. It also requires any law changing the initial, statutory composition of the commission must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote in each chamber of the Legislature.

The membership of a 15 member Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials is set by statute. The commission is composed of: eight persons selected by lot from among the registered voters of the state's congressional districts, one from each district; and seven persons with experience in personnel management who are selected jointly by the speaker of the House and the president of the Senate. Of the seven, one must be selected

from each of the following five sectors: private institutions of higher education, business, professional personnel management, legal profession, and organized labor. Of the remaining two, one must be recommended by the chair of the state's Personnel Board, and one must be recommended by the presidents of the state's four-year institutions of higher education. Members of the commission serve four year terms. The term of office of the current commission members began in 1991.

By statute, a schedule of salaries for officials is to be established by the affirmative vote of not less than eight members of the commission.

The secretary of state must establish procedures for selecting, by lot, a person from a congressional district for appointment to the commission if the person originally selected from the district declines the appointment.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The membership of the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials is expanded to 17 members effective February 15, 1995. One member is added to reflect the addition of one congressional district to the state. One additional person is to be appointed jointly by the speaker of the House and the president of the Senate; this person must be experienced in personnel management and must be from the financial institutions sector of the state.

The salary of an official is set by an affirmative vote of nine members of the commission, rather than eight, as currently.

The secretary of state is expressly directed to establish procedures for providing a new selection, by lot, from a district if a person appointed to the commission from the district resigns.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill requires the speaker of the House and the president of the Senate to appoint a person to the commission who is from the financial institutions sector. This appointment replaces an appointment in the original bill which is to be made upon the recommendation of the association of counties. The original bill permits a salary to be set by a majority of those present in a quorum; the substitute bill requires the affirmative vote of nine members. The substitute bill expressly requires the secretary of state to provide procedures for filling, by lot, vacancies in positions appointed from the congressional districts.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect February 15, 1995.

Testimony For: (Original bill): In 1991, the salary commission had, in the end, only 11 active members. The law required a super-majority of those active to vote for a salary schedule. A majority of a quorum should be sufficient.

Testimony Against: (Original bill): (1) The affirmative votes of nine members of the commission should be needed to set a salary, not a majority of a quorum. (2) Selections by the speaker and the president should be from among those in unemployment lines, not from high-ranking peers. (3) The law should be clarified to permit the secretary of state to fill a vacancy, by lot, from the same pool of registered voters in a congressional district used in making the appointment to the commission for the full term.

Witnesses: (Original Bill): Leonard Nord, Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials (in favor); Dave Elliot, Office of the Secretary of State (in favor with vacancy clarification); and Jack Drarragh, Sherry Bockwinkle, and Gene Morain, LIMIT (opposed).