

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HCR 4412

As Passed House
March 12, 1993

Brief Description: Appointing a poet laureate to be paid in Washington wine.

Sponsors: Representatives Jacobsen, Miller, Anderson, R. Fisher and Finkbeiner.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 24, 1993, DP;
Passed House, March 12, 1993.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Dyer; King; and Pruitt.

Staff: Bonnie Austin (786-7135).

Background: Washington has a thriving poetry community that includes performing poets, published poets, and academics. This pool of talent is generally unrecognized and under-utilized by state government.

Summary of Bill: The governor will appoint a Washington poet to serve as the poet laureate of the state. The poet laureate will write poetry and lofty expressions to be read at appropriate state occasions. The term of the poet laureate will be two years. The salary of the poet laureate will consist of one butt, approximately 126 gallons, of Washington wine per year donated by the Washington wine industry.

Before appointing the poet laureate, the governor will confer with a nominating committee consisting of one member of the House of Representatives, one member of the Senate, and one member appointed by the governor. The committee will seek nominations from poets, writers, poetry critics, professors of English, magazine and literary review editors, state and local arts commission members, and others exhibiting an exceptional knowledge of poetry.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: One butt of wine per year is the compensation given to poets laureate in English history. Washington had a poet laureate in the 1890s. We should revive this tradition because poetry provides inspiration. Poetry gently gets a point across that would otherwise go uncommunicated. This is promoting education reform and getting children to create and write instead of watching MTV and videos. The Washington wine industry supports this measure.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Ken Jacobsen, prime sponsor (pro); Bart Baxter, American Academy of Poets (pro); Italene Gaddis, poet (pro); and Victoria Chiechi, Washington Wine Institute (pro).