

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6481

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 4, 1994

Brief Description: Authorizing the services and activities committees to determine services and activities fees.

SPONSORS: Senators Bauer, Prince, West, Sellar, Morton, Drew, Rinehart, A. Smith and Sheldon

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6481 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; Cantu, Prince, Quigley, Sheldon and West.

Staff: Scott Huntley (786-7421)

Hearing Dates: February 2, 1994; February 4, 1994

BACKGROUND:

Services and activities fees are statutorily defined to mean fees which are charged to all students and are used to fund student activities and programs. These fees are also dedicated to repaying bonds and other indebtedness for facilities such as dormitories, hospitals, dining halls, parking facilities, and student, faculty and employee housing.

By law, the governing boards of the state institutions of higher education have the final authority for adopting a services and activities fees budget. The governing boards also have the responsibility to charge and collect the fees from each student, and within limits set by law, to establish the level of the services and activities fees at their respective institutions.

In 1990, legislation was enacted which strengthened the role of students in recommending and negotiating the budget for services and activities fees at the respective institutions. This legislation gave the Services and Activities Fee (S & A) Committee, which has a mandated student majority, the ability to propose program priorities and budget levels directly to the governing board, rather than through the college administration. The governing board is directed to give priority consideration to student desires in budget areas that do not impact the stability of programs affecting students, pre-existing contractual obligations, or bond covenants.

It is maintained by student representatives that since the funds for the services and activities fees budgets are provided by this mandatory student fee, the students should have control over the fee setting and budgeting process.

SUMMARY:

The Services and Activities Fee (S & A) Committee will have the authority to determine the usage, under law, of the services and activities fees at the state institutions of higher education. The S & A Committee, rather than the governing board, will adopt the guidelines governing the establishment and funding of programs supported by the services and activities fees.

The S & A Committee will determine priorities and budget levels for the portion of program budgets derived from services and activities fees. These fees, and other revenue generated by programs funded by these fees, will be expended through a process established by the S & A Committee. Services and activities fees are not subject to the Budget and Accounting Act.

At all state institutions of higher education, the S & A Committee is given the authority to charge and collect from each student, a services and activities fee. The committee may increase the existing services and activities fee annually (for each academic year of the 1993-95 biennium only, there are statutorily set maximum levels). The S & A Committee has the authority to mandate a fee increase.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The provisions of the original bill are eliminated. The services and activities fee process is changed so that both the governing board and the S&A fee committee must give express approval to any shifting of S&A fee moneys once the budget for those moneys has been established.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 24, 1994

TESTIMONY FOR (original bill):

The students should have full control of student program fees. The administration at certain colleges have engaged in the practice of shifting moneys without taking student concerns into account. The governing boards shouldn't have the ability to veto student priorities for these student moneys.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (original bill):

The present S&A fee budgeting process has worked well and this bill will remove accountability from that process. The bill undermines the authority of the governing boards, without solving any problems. The supporters of the bill have not identified any problems with the existing process. The governing board should have some involvement in the process for budgeting and spending these moneys.

TESTIFIED (original bill): Jack Dutra, Grays Harbor Community College (con); Christopher Yates, South Puget Sound Community College (con); Sherry Burkey, University of Washington (con); Mary Marcey, Central Washington University (con); George Durrie, Eastern Washington University (con); Steve Lindstrom, Washington Student Lobby (pro); Todd McGee, Associated Students of UW (pro); Heather Flodstrom, Associated Students of CWU (pro); Piragha Walla, President, Associated Students of UW (pro)