

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2374

As Passed House:

February 13, 1998

Title: An act relating to the membership of the governing boards of the state's institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Requiring one student member on each state institution of higher education's governing board.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Higher Educ (originally sponsored by Representatives Carlson, Dunn, Constantine, Radcliff, Gardner, Sheahan, Kenney, O'Brien, L. Thomas, Scott, Linville, Hatfield, Benson, Romero, Butler, Kessler, Chopp, Costa, Anderson, Cooke, Cooper, Schoesler, Mason, Gombosky, Conway, Lantz and Tokuda).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/22/98, 1/29/98 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/13/98, 83-14.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Radcliff, Vice Chairman; Mason, Ranking Minority Member; Kenney, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Butler; Dunn; O'Brien and Sheahan.

Staff: Marilee Scarbrough (786-7196).

Background: The public research institutions, the University of Washington (UW) and Washington State University (WSU), are each governed by a board of regents. Each board has nine members appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, to serve six-year terms.

The Evergreen State College (TESC) and the regional universities, Central Washington University (CWU), Eastern Washington University (EWU), and Western Washington University (WWU), are each governed by a seven-member board of trustees appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, to serve a term of six years.

The research universities allow one graduate student, one undergraduate student, and one representative of the faculty senate to serve as advisory members to the boards. The advisory members are presidents of their respective associations. Advisory members do not vote, but do have a formal place on the agenda at each meeting.

The regional universities have the chair of the faculty senate and the student body president sit as advisory members to the board. CWU includes the chair of the association of administrators. EWU's board receives from the advisory members a written and an oral report at each meeting. Advisory members do not vote.

Sitting at the table with the board of trustees at TESC are the past chair of the faculty agenda committee, one student volunteer, one alumni representative, and one staff representative elected by the staff. These advisory members do not vote but take part in the discussion.

Summary of Bill: For the University of Washington and for Washington State University, the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, appoints one full-time student in good standing to the board of regents. The term of the student regent is for one year from June 1 until the appointment and qualification of the successor. Each board of regents is 10 members, with six members constituting a quorum.

For CWU, WWU, EWU, and TESC the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, appoints one full-time student in good standing to the board of trustees. The term of the student trustee is for one year from June 1 until the appointment and qualification of the successor. Each board of trustees is eight members, with five members constituting a quorum.

Student board members must excuse themselves from participating or voting on issues related to hiring, discipline or tenure of faculty and personnel.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Currently, students do not have a vote and do not have access to the same information as a regent or trustee. Students invest in the institution by paying tuition and fees, yet they do not have a vote. A student vote will allow a fresh perspective. A student on the governance board will provide for better communication. Three changes are requested: (1) student regents will not participate or vote on issues regarding individual personnel; (2) student governments will submit names for the Governor's consideration; and (3) student terms of office will begin and end in June.

Testimony Against: Trustees hold something of value. Students, faculty, and staff are beneficiaries of the trust. A trustee represents an outside perspective and should maintain the outside perspective. This creates an equity issue among constituencies. If students have a vote, then faculty and staff should also have a vote. Otherwise, we violate the principles of equity. This legislation changes the nature of higher education governing boards. They become interest-based boards. The issue is not students becoming members of the board, but rather becoming a member only because they are students. Other people have interest in the university's success. Boards that represent all of those with an interest are very large boards. They could include organized labor, alumni, agricultural interests and faculty. The bill is not needed because there are no complaints on how WSU has dealt with students' concerns on issues.

Testified: Adrienne Thompson, WWU - Washington Student Lobby; Garrett Ferencz UW - Washington Student Lobby; Kim Merriman, The Evergreen State College; Judy McNickle, Western Washington University; and Larry Ganders, Washington State University.