

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5182

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Education, February 21, 1997

**Title:** An act relating to state board of education membership.

**Brief Description:** Providing for citizen election of members of the state board of education and increasing the number of board members to two per congressional district.

**Sponsors:** Senators Roach, Hochstatter and Zarelli.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Education: 1/24/97, 2/21/97 [DP, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hochstatter, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Johnson and Zarelli.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Goings, McAuliffe and Rasmussen.

**Staff:** Karen Carter (786-7424)

**Background:** The State Board of Education is responsible for the oversight, management, and regulation of a wide range of common school programs and activities. For example, it approves teacher preparation programs, establishes teacher certification requirements, enforces basic education statutes, and allocates funds for school construction.

Membership on the board consists of one representative from each of the state's nine congressional districts, the Superintendent of Public Instruction as an ex-officio member and chief executive officer, and a private school representative. Members serve four-year terms on a staggered basis.

Under current law, local school boards in their respective areas elect those members representing congressional districts. Governing boards of the state's K-12 private schools elect the private school representative. Two high school students are appointed by the Washington Association of Student Councils to serve as ex officio members of the board.

**Summary of Bill:** The composition, membership and method of electing the State Board of Education is modified. The board must be entirely comprised of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and two nonpartisan members from each state congressional district, except for districts at large, who are elected by the people at the time of a general election.

Provisions for board vacancies are modified. A section is added to provide for the first transitional election and to maintain staggered four-year terms. The appointment of students to serve as ex officio board members is unaffected.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Washington stands to benefit from an open, engaged debate with citizens about education policy. To popularize the election of State Board members is one sure way to accomplish that goal. Of further concern is the fact that parents of K-12 students do not know enough about the role played by the State Board, nor how to participate and influence its policy deliberations.

**Testimony Against:** There is no evidence that a popularly elected or larger State Board will improve policy outcomes. Doubling the membership costs money and comes at the expense of more public meetings made possible by fewer members. The nonvoting position now held by private schools is not guaranteed by this proposal and while a competitive elective process remains, their contributions and concerns may not be represented. Campaigns on a congressional level are expensive to mount and not necessary to accomplish the goal of open and improved dialogue between parents and the State Board of Education.

**Testified:** Senator Roach, prime sponsor (pro); Bobbie May, State Board of Education (con); Dwayne Slate, WSSDA (con); Stephen Dinger, WFIS (con).