

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5554

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 2, 2000

Title: An act relating to the powers and duties of the boards of trustees of community and technical colleges.

Brief Description: Authorizing community and technical colleges boards of trustees to adopt rules regarding weapons on district-owned or maintained property.

Sponsors: Senators Costa, Shin, Hale, Winsley, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles, Gardner and Kline; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/8/99, 2/22/99 [DP, DNP]; 1/26/2000, 2/2/2000 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Bauer, Jacobsen, McAuliffe and B. Sheldon.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Horn and Sheahan.

Staff: William Bridges (786-7424)

Background: The boards of trustees of community and technical colleges have various powers under RCW 28B.50.140, but the statute is silent on the power to adopt rules regarding weapons on college property.

Summary of Bill: An additional power is granted to the boards of trustees for community and technical colleges: the authorization to make rules pertaining to the possession and use of weapons by students and visitors on property owned, operated, or maintained by their districts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This is a question of local control. Each board of trustees should have the right to determine what is best for its school. Guns in the classroom disrupt learning because they breed fear and intimidation. Guns are prohibited in K-12 schools and many

high school students attend community colleges, so we need to provide a seamless gun-free environment for them. Guns are dangerous because of the growing propensity in our society to escalate small arguments into violent confrontations.

Testimony Against: Community colleges are also used as community centers at night, so any regulations concerning weapons will impact the surrounding community. Some community college students are abused women who need to protect themselves. Because criminals will not follow regulations concerning weapons, only law abiding citizens will be harmed. The bill is contrary to the state preemption statute concerning firearms. Gun-free zones are dangerous because persons wanting to create mayhem have easy targets. People must be able to protect themselves, because police only arrive after a crime has taken place. England and Australia control guns and their crime rates are higher than ours.

Testified: PRO: Mary Hale, faculty, Edmonds Community College.; Cindy Hough, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jeff Ford, student, Grays Harbor Community College; Karen Miller, trustee, Edmonds Community College; Wayne Fournier, student, South Puget Sound Community College; Karl Jonietz, President, Olympic Community College; Lynn McKinnon, Washington Public Employees Association; William Bonaudi, President, Big Bend Community College; CON: Joe Waldron, Citizens's Commission on the Right to Bear Arms/Gun Owners Action League of Washington; Nancy Fleek, Myrtle Cooper, Merton Cooper, citizen; Ken Houghton, Council for Legislative Action, Washington.