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HOUSE BILL 3049

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State of Washington

56th Legislature

2000 Regular Session

By Representatives Dunshee, Scott, Esser, Van Luven, Veloria, Santos,  
D. Schmidt, Romero and Miloscia

Read first time 01/26/2000. Referred to Committee on State Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to citizen participation in the discussion of  
2 public issues; adding new sections to chapter 43.63A RCW; and providing  
3 an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that some  
6 citizens have difficulty accessing political processes that rely on  
7 public hearings held at locations that are distant from their residence  
8 or workplace. To increase public participation in the political  
9 process, the legislature intends to establish a self-funding pilot  
10 process by which citizens can receive information about public issues  
11 and provide feedback to elected officials in a convenient, local  
12 setting.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The office of citizen councilor is  
14 created in accordance with section 10 of this act. According to  
15 Webster's dictionary, "councilor" means an official advisor to a  
16 sovereign or chief magistrate. Any citizen registered to vote who  
17 volunteers to act as an official government advisor may become a  
18 citizen councilor on request by sending a letter to the department of

1 community, trade, and economic development or calling a special toll-  
2 free number and paying a nominal fee as set by the steering committee.  
3 Citizen councilors shall act collectively as official advisors and a  
4 sounding board for public officials and agencies, legislative study  
5 committees, and the department of community, trade, and economic  
6 development on issues of public interest or concern. Conveners of  
7 citizen councilor groups shall be those designated by the citizen  
8 councilor coordinator or deputy citizen councilor coordinator under  
9 section 4 of this act from among citizen councilors who volunteer to  
10 host a group. Every effort shall be made to assign citizen councilors  
11 to a group that meets at a convenient time and place. Meetings will  
12 usually be in residence or work area zip codes.

13 (2) Citizen councilors may participate:

14 (a) In a citizen councilor organizational group under section 7 of  
15 this act;

16 (b) In a citizen councilor group usually organized by residence or  
17 work area zip code with the assistance of the citizen councilor  
18 coordinator; or

19 (c) As an individual if the individual is unable to attend meetings  
20 in groups due to age, disability, or remote location.

21 (3) Citizen councilors will be reassigned a group on request to  
22 assure that their group meeting place, time, and makeup is convenient  
23 and compatible.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department of community, trade, and  
25 economic development:

26 (1) Shall determine suggested issues for public discussion  
27 approximately quarterly but not more than monthly from suggestions  
28 received from public officials, agencies, legislators, and individual  
29 citizen councilors and recommend an appropriate issue or issues for  
30 consideration by citizen councilors to a steering committee. The  
31 steering committee shall be composed of four voting members: One  
32 member of the minority and one member of the majority party from each  
33 house of the legislature. Other nonvoting members of the steering  
34 committee shall be: (a) A representative from the governor's office,  
35 (b) a representative from any organization participating with over  
36 fifty groups of eight to twelve persons under section 5(7) of this act,  
37 and (c) the citizen councilor coordinator and deputy citizen councilor  
38 coordinator selected as provided in section 4 of this act except that

1 the citizen councilor coordinator or deputy citizen councilor  
2 coordinator may vote on the steering committee in case of a tie;

3 (2) After approval by the legislative members of the steering  
4 committee, shall assign the issue or issues approved for discussion to  
5 the volunteer citizen councilor coordinator for preparation and  
6 implementation by value reporters and others. Value reporters assigned  
7 to gather information on issues shall be careful to present all issues  
8 as evenhandedly as possible, taking care to present the generally  
9 prevailing viewpoints surrounding an issue or issues from experts,  
10 officials, and others in an effort to provide the public with  
11 information needed for discussion. Value reporters shall conduct  
12 interviews of experts, officials, and others to solicit their various  
13 viewpoints and record such interviews on audio or video tape for later  
14 reproduction and distribution to citizen councilor groups. Before any  
15 materials are released to citizen councilor groups, however, persons  
16 interviewed and taped shall approve their taped interview for release  
17 or complete another interview to their satisfaction, otherwise their  
18 statement shall not be included in materials sent to citizens;

19 (3) Shall approve the public information materials prepared by the  
20 citizen councilor coordinator, deputy citizen councilor coordinator,  
21 and staffs and authorize its distribution to citizen councilors to the  
22 steering committee for final approval before distribution.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The offices of citizen councilor coordinator  
24 and deputy citizen councilor coordinator are created within the  
25 department of community, trade, and economic development. The director  
26 of community, trade, and economic development shall appoint the citizen  
27 councilor coordinator and deputy citizen councilor coordinator with the  
28 advice and consent of the steering committee. The citizen councilor  
29 coordinator and deputy citizen councilor coordinator shall serve at the  
30 pleasure of the director of community, trade, and economic development,  
31 until terminated with the approval of the steering committee, and shall  
32 be volunteers and serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed  
33 for actual expenses incurred in carrying out their duties under  
34 sections 1 through 10 of this act as funds are available.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The citizen councilor coordinator and deputy  
36 citizen councilor coordinator shall:

- 1 (1) Promote to the citizens of the state the citizen councilor  
2 program and its contribution to public and private planning processes;
- 3 (2) Oversee preparation, tabulation, summarization, and  
4 dissemination of data and information by the volunteer staff;
- 5 (3) Receive, on behalf of the citizen councilor revolving fund,  
6 gifts and donations of real or personal property, including cash and  
7 in-kind services;
- 8 (4) Hire a value reporter and other paid staff to assist the  
9 volunteer staff if funds are available;
- 10 (5) Contract for any services including without limitation toll-  
11 free telephone number and answering services, keypunch, computer,  
12 scanning, recording, reporting, research, consulting, printing, and  
13 mailing to carry out this chapter as long as the providers of these  
14 services either work without financial compensation or are unrelated to  
15 the citizen councilor coordinator or deputy citizen councilor  
16 coordinator;
- 17 (6) Solicit volunteers to assist in administering the program from  
18 community service, educational, civic, business, religious, and other  
19 organizations;
- 20 (7) Solicit citizen councilor groups from existing organizations;
- 21 (8) Solicit individual citizen councilors to participate in local  
22 groups organized by mutual convenience usually within the same  
23 residence or work zip code area;
- 24 (9) Assign value reporters to interview scholars, experts, public  
25 officials, planners, leaders, and others on tape concerning topics of  
26 discussion assigned by the department of community, trade, and economic  
27 development;
- 28 (10) Produce audio or video cassette tapes, or both, and printed  
29 materials evenhandedly;
- 30 (11) Mail public information materials to citizen councilor  
31 conveners or individual citizen councilors, or both;
- 32 (12) Provide, at cost, group mailing labels of its own conveners on  
33 request of an organization participating or to a county, municipality,  
34 or school district if a private iteration of their own constituents is  
35 desired at their own time and expense;
- 36 (13) Scan or tabulate, or both, citizen councilor response sheets  
37 using, as appropriate, the "Fast Forum" computer program that is  
38 available without cost to the citizen councilor program and the

1 University of Washington academic computing services as a nonprofit,  
2 external user;

3 (14) Mail organizational, community, school, business, or church  
4 profiles to the leaders of such participating organizations for their  
5 information and without cost when they have over fifty groups  
6 responding state-wide;

7 (15) Prepare summary reports of data generated and press releases;

8 (16) Mail summary reports and other information to all citizen  
9 councilors, conveners, participating organizations, and to those public  
10 officials who have indicated to the citizen councilor coordinator that  
11 they are interested; and

12 (17) Maintain data generated for public and media reference in the  
13 department of community, trade, and economic development.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The citizen councilor coordinator shall  
15 actively encourage citizen councilor groups to form throughout the  
16 state. Citizen councilor groups shall usually consist of a minimum of  
17 eight and a maximum of twelve regularly assigned members and meet on  
18 call of their convener at times and places they deem most appropriate  
19 during a thirty-day or other designated time period. Citizen councilor  
20 groups shall normally meet three or four times per year on state  
21 issues. They shall have the opportunity to listen to audio or video  
22 tapes articulating an issue of public interest or concern and study  
23 other materials prepared or authorized as described in section 3 of  
24 this act. Citizen councilors shall have the opportunity to respond  
25 anonymously making their opinions known on individual mark-sense  
26 response sheets for return to the citizen councilor coordinator for  
27 keypunching or optical scanning, tabulation, and analysis.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Eight through twelve citizens from  
29 organizations such as, but not limited to, community, civic,  
30 associations, cooperatives, unions, church, business, or school  
31 district groups may enroll as an organizational group with their own  
32 convener designated. An organizational profile report shall be  
33 provided the leaders of organizations with fifty or more groups without  
34 cost to inform them of how their members responded to public issues  
35 posed or approved by the department of community, trade, and economic  
36 development and shall be open to public inspection in the offices of  
37 the department of community, trade, and economic development. If

1 additional profiles or services are requested by an organization of its  
2 own constituents, the policy, rules, and fees to cover such costs shall  
3 be as determined by the citizen councilor coordinator. Organizations  
4 with fifty or more groups may purchase mailing labels of their group  
5 conveners at cost and prepare and mail their own group materials for  
6 tabulation at their own effort and expense. This data shall not be  
7 tabulated by the citizen councilor coordinator and shall not be  
8 combined with the public data nor available for public inspection at  
9 the department of community, trade, and economic development.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Each citizen councilor shall be asked to  
11 make donations from time to time to help cover the costs of the citizen  
12 councilor program estimated at ten to fifteen dollars per person per  
13 year at 1995 costs. It is also the intention of the legislature that  
14 donations and gifts be solicited from public-spirited individuals,  
15 businesses, and foundations for the purpose of funding the program.  
16 However, since all costs of this program are provided by donations with  
17 no funds from public sources, the citizen councilor coordinator shall  
18 use his or her discretion in determining the scale and the scope of the  
19 program so that expenses do not exceed available funds.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** A citizen councilor revolving fund is  
21 created and shall consist of donations collected under this chapter and  
22 any moneys appropriated to it by law for specific purposes. The state  
23 treasurer shall be custodian of the revolving fund. Disbursements from  
24 the revolving fund shall be on authorization of the citizen councilor  
25 coordinator. In order to maintain an effective expenditure and revenue  
26 control, the citizen councilor revolving fund shall be subject in all  
27 respects to chapter 43.88 RCW, but no appropriation is required to  
28 permit expenditures and payment of obligations from the fund.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** (1) The department of community, trade, and  
30 economic development may provide the citizen councilor coordinator and  
31 his or her volunteer staff with space in existing offices and with  
32 clerical services from existing staff to assist in establishing and  
33 conducting the citizen councilor program. Appropriations are not  
34 required, but the director of community, trade, and economic  
35 development may consider the services provided under this section in  
36 submitting the department's budget.

1       (2) The citizen councilor coordinator shall seek to obtain  
2 donations from citizen councilor organizational groups, citizen  
3 councilors, and public-spirited individuals, community service  
4 organizations, businesses, and foundations to cover the costs of the  
5 program. When ten thousand dollars in donations have been received,  
6 the department of community, trade, and economic development shall  
7 authorize the citizen councilor coordinator to establish a toll-free  
8 telephone number and answering service and to develop a list of the  
9 names, addresses, and telephone numbers of persons and groups  
10 interested in serving as citizen councilors, citizen councilor  
11 conveners, or citizen councilor organizational groups, or in making  
12 donations. When forty thousand dollars in donations have been  
13 received, the citizen councilor coordinator may initiate the new  
14 communication process contemplated in sections 1 through 10 of this act  
15 and continue it at a scope and scale that is supportable by the  
16 resources available.

17       (3) In the event the program under this chapter fails to support  
18 itself and is necessary to be terminated by the department of  
19 community, trade, and economic development or expires, funds remaining  
20 after payment of all outstanding expenses and disposal of equipment and  
21 supplies owned shall be deposited in the general fund.

22       NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 11.** Sections 1 through 10 of this act expire  
23 June 30, 2004.

24       NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 12.** Sections 1 through 10 of this act are each  
25 added to chapter 43.63A RCW.

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