
Appropriations Committee

HB 2978

Brief Description: Abolishing the state library and transferring its powers, duties, and functions.

Sponsors: Representatives Sommers and Ogden; by request of Governor Locke.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Transfers a number of the State Library's functions, duties and powers to other state agencies.
- Creates a task force to oversee the dissemination of the library's collection.
- Abolishes the State Library, the State Library Commission and their respective duties.

Hearing Date: 2/27/02

Staff: Patricia Linehan (786-7178).

Background:

The 1853 Organic Act that created the Territory of Washington provided for the establishment of a territorial library. When statehood was achieved in 1889, one of the first acts of the 1889-90 Legislature was to establish the Washington State Library. The purpose of the territorial library was to serve the government's information needs which has continued to be the library's primary mission.

The major functions of the library are:

to provide reference and research support to the Legislature and state government agencies; to serve as a central depository for current and retrospective collections of state and federal documents, newspapers, and state historical information; to support the establishment, development, and coordination of local library services statewide; to provide library services to residents and staff of correctional institutions, psychiatric hospitals, and institutions for the developmentally disabled; and to provide online access to state and local government information.

During the 2000 Legislative session, the Legislature directed the Washington State Institute

for Public Policy (WSIPP) to study the mission, programs, and usage of the State Library.

As a result of this study, although the WSIPP found the library's mission to be sound, it made the following recommendations:

Accelerate the move from print to online content by joining a larger purchasing unit with the publicly funded academic libraries. Focus the library's activities more sharply than they are today. Implementing a limited market system by instituting fees for service would help clarify the relative value of services for users. Implement a more aggressive book weeding-campaign. Reduce the physical presence of the library on the capitol campus and develop more appropriate space for technical and service functions elsewhere.

The state library provides services similar to academic, agency and other public libraries. Current revenue shortfalls of the state necessitate reducing or merging the services and operations of many state agencies. Because use of the state library by state agencies, the legislature and academia has declined due to increased availability of digitized information, the Governor recommended that the state library be eliminated.

Summary of Bill:

The State Library, the State Library Commission and their respective duties are abolished. Certain sections of the State Publications Distribution Center chapter of the RCW are repealed.

A number of the State Library's functions, duties and powers are transferred to other state agencies.

State Library employees who are currently located in branch libraries are transferred to the state agency in which the branch is located. The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library is transferred to the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development. The Washington Room and other Northwest collections are transferred to the State Archivist, in the Office of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is designated as the state's federal depository and the regional depository for Washington and Alaska. Agencies assuming functional responsibilities will receive all corresponding assets, tangible property, records, files, documents and reports in the possession of the library, and all rules and pending business before the library will be continued by the agency assuming individual functional areas.

All existing contracts and obligations will remain in full force and will be performed by the agency assuming individual functional areas. Any appropriations made to the library will be transferred and credited to the agency assuming a specific functional area and will take place on October 31, 2002. The Director of the Office of Financial Management will determine the allocations for state agencies who assume functional areas and will resolve any questions that may arise.

A task force is created to oversee the dissemination of the library's collection. The task force will begin its work on April 1, 2002 and complete it by October 31, 2002. It will publish a document that details which state agency received state library books, documents, or other printed materials. The chair of the task force is appointed by the Governor and is composed of the following members:

The State Librarian and State Archivist; one representative from each of the public four year institutions of higher education; two representatives from community college libraries; four representatives from local public libraries; one representative from each state agency which currently houses a branch library; and one representative each from the Office of Financial Management, Department of Information Services, Department of General Administration, Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, Department of Personnel, and the Office of the Secretary of State.

Numerous technical changes related to references to the State Librarian, the State Library, and the State Library Commission are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 25, 2002.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on October 31, 2002, except for section 301 which takes effect on April 1, 2002.