

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5871

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Human Services & Corrections, February 22, 2001

**Title:** An act relating to offender education in department of corrections' facilities.

**Brief Description:** Providing guidelines for offender education in department of corrections' facilities.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles and Hewitt.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 2/16/01, 2/22/01 [DPS-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5871 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Carlson, Franklin, Hewitt, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Long and Stevens.

**Staff:** Fara Daun (786-7459)

**Background:** The Governor's proposed budget eliminates offender vocational education. Offender vocational education has been shown to be cost effective in reducing offender recidivism. The current statute would permit the department to eliminate the program. The Legislature has mandated that offenders earn early release time. In addition to avoiding infractions, offenders earn early release time based on their participation in, and completion of educational and vocational programming.

A complete cut of the corrections vocational education program would eliminate over 50 full-time equivalent community college faculty positions.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The Department of Corrections (DOC) must maintain a continuum of work and educational programs. When proposing to eliminate any educational or vocational program found to be cost effective in reducing recidivism, that produces goods or services for the Department of Corrections or other state agencies, or that meets penological objectives, the department must offset the cost savings of the reduction with the cost of replacing the goods or services or meeting the penological objectives, and the estimated state costs for increased recidivism attributable to the reduction.

DOC may not eliminate entire categories of educational or vocational programs in which inmates are required to participate.

DOC and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must collaborate to find ways to implement distance learning programs and distance learning within

programs, including the appropriate use of intranets. DOC and the board must consider ways to overcome traditional barriers to distance learning and whether implementation of distance learning is cost effective and report to the Legislature by December 1, 2001.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The substitute strikes language prohibiting DOC from recommending a budget cut for an educational or vocational program found cost effective in reducing recidivism. It clarifies that DOC must show offsets to the budget reductions for educational or vocational programs to show increased costs for replacing goods or services, meeting penological objectives, and for the estimated state cost of increases in recidivism attributable to the reductions.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 12, 2001.

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

**Testimony For:** Approximately 97 percent of offenders are eventually released. If they are not prepared to become contributing citizens, they will reoffend. Vocational programs reduce recidivism by about 13 percent. Vocational programs save the department money by performing janitorial, construction, welding, barbering, and computer services for the department. The programs provide an incentive for the offenders to manage their behavior. Some of the programs are capable of generating enough revenue to be self supporting. In addition to the cost of replacing the benefits of the programs, there is a significant cost to shutting down these programs that are not accounted for in the Governor's budget. The programs provide hope for the inmates that they can succeed on release. About 80 faculty members would lose their jobs. The state needs to look at distance learning.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles, sponsor; Steve Van Ausdale, President, Walla Walla Community College (pro); Mike Scroggins, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (pro); Wendy Rader-Konalfalski, Washington Federation of Teachers & Washington Education Association (pro); Mack McKenzie, Faculty, Airway Heights Correctional Center (pro); Mike Hawley, Faculty Centralia College, Garrett Hines Corrections (pro); Thomas Fifer, Faculty McNeill Island Correctional Center (pro); William Allen, Faculty McNeill Island Correctional Center (pro); Jim King, Coalition on Inmate Labor.