

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6558

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 7, 2002

Title: An act relating to the governance of the Washington state school for the deaf.

Brief Description: Revising provisions for the governance of the Washington state school for the deaf.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Carlson and Hargrove; by request of Governor Locke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/4/02, 2/7/02 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6558 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Carlson, Finkbeiner, Hewitt, Hochstatter, Johnson, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Regala and Zarelli.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: The Washington State School for the Deaf (WSD) is located in Vancouver, Washington, and serves to educate and train hearing impaired children. Under current law, the WSD is managed by a superintendent appointed by the Governor. Additionally, the WSD has a Board of Trustees, which is also appointed by the Governor, and is comprised of nine voting members (who serve subject to Senate confirmation) and four nonvoting members. The Board of Trustees serves in an advisory role only, making recommendations to the Legislature and superintendent regarding the development of programs for the hearing impaired and the operation of the WSD.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The powers and duties of the WSD Board of Trustees and superintendent are changed. The superintendent must supervise and manage the WSD; however, many of the superintendent's duties require Board of Trustees' approval. The Board of Trustees must provide oversight to the Legislature and Governor of the WSD. Additionally, the Board of Trustees has approval authority over the superintendent's recommended course of study at the WSD and the rules governing the operation of the WSD's residential facilities. Finally, the Board of Trustees must submit a biennial report to the Legislature and the Governor regarding the status of the WSD's operations.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The WSD Board of Trustees must provide general oversight to the Legislature and Governor of the entire operations of the school. The composition of the board is changed; the board is still comprised of nine voting members, but they do not have to come from each of the state's congressional districts. When making appointments to the board, the Governor is encouraged to consider geographic diversity and

is encouraged to appoint members from specified stakeholder groups. Additionally, the WSD superintendent does not serve as executive secretary for the board. The board must: (1) report to both the Legislature and the Governor, (2) oversee the development and implementation of a quality improvement plan, (3) monitor enforcement of education civil rights laws at the school, and (4) submit a biennial evaluation of the superintendent to the Governor, as required in current law. Finally, the effective date was advanced to July 1, 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: July 1, 2002.

Testimony For: In light of recent allegations of abuse at the Washington State School for the Deaf (WSD), concerns have been raised regarding the current governance structure of the school. The WSD Board of Trustees should serve in more than just an advisory role. The board should have more direct legal authority over the school and should be providing oversight of the operations of the school.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Duane Sommers, School for th Deaf, Board of Trustees; Kari Burrell, Governor's Executive Policy Office; Gary King, WEA.