

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5996

As Reported by House Committee On:

State Government

Title: An act relating to hosting the 2005 conference of the national conference of state legislatures and other government conferences.

Brief Description: Creating a committee to host the 2005 NCSL conference.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators West, Brown, Kohl-Welles, T. Sheldon, Shin, Hale, Rossi, Fairley, Spanel, Franklin, Parlette, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Winsley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 3/25/03, 4/3/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a committee to plan and host the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) 2005 convention.
- Creates a non-appropriated account specifically for the purpose of hosting the 2005 NCSL Convention.
- Revises ethics laws to allow solicitation and acceptance of gifts when it is for the sole purpose of hosting a government conference.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Shabro, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Nixon, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The Washington State Legislature is hosting the 2005 convention of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). It is expected that the convention will bring

millions of dollars to the state in economic benefits. However, current law limits the activities of state officers and state employees relating to the solicitation and acceptance of gifts.

State ethics laws prohibit state officers and state employees from accepting gifts under circumstances where it could be reasonably expected that the gifts would influence their votes, actions or official judgment, or be considered as part of a reward for action or inaction. Limitations are also placed on gifts of a non-influential nature. Generally, gifts may not be accepted that have an aggregate value of \$50 or more during any calendar year from any single source.

Summary of Bill:

The 2005 NCSL host committee is created to plan and host the 2005 convention of the NCSL in Seattle. Committee membership includes the following:

- Four members of the Senate, including the majority leader and another member of the majority party, and the minority leader and another member of the minority party;
- Four members of the House of Representatives including the speaker and another member of the majority party, and the minority leader and another member of the minority party;
- The Lieutenant Governor;
- The Secretary of the Senate;
- The Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives; and
- Two former members of the Legislature, one from each major political party appointed by a majority of the members of the committee.

The majority leader of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives will serve as co-chairs of the committee. Staff from the Senate and the House of Representatives will assist the committee and additional resources may be contracted.

A non-appropriated account is established and all receipts designated for and expenditures from are for the limited purposes of hosting the convention. Only the co-chairs or a designee may expend funds from the account and only with the authorization of the committee.

In addition to planning the convention, the committee may accept monetary donations, grants, and in-kind donations, and may engage in or encourage fund-raising activities in support of the convention.

It is no longer a violation of ethics laws for state officers and state employees to solicit for or accept gifts, grants, or donations when it is for the sole purpose of hosting a government conference.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The NCSL Executive Committee has selected Seattle for its 2005 conference in a highly competitive process. This conference will bring money and prestige to the state and businesses. When the conference was held here in 1985, over \$15 million came into the state, and more is expected in 2005. Holding the conference in Seattle requires that a host committee be established to start raising funds. A change is needed in statute to allow legislators to raise money for this conference. The language in the bill will cover any government conference. The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development supports the bill. The 2005 conference allows for our state to be showcased. A conference of this size brings repeat visitors to our state and, because of the exposure received, attracts more conferences and meetings.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Kohl-Welles; and Robin Pollard, Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development.