
Education Committee

HB 1466

Brief Description: Promoting natural science, wildlife, and environmental education.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Tom, Haigh, Talcott, McDermott, Anderson, Linville, Rockefeller, Ericksen, Upthegrove, Jarrett, Dunshee, Nixon, Kessler, Ruderman, Eickmeyer, Cox, Lovick, Hunt, Grant, Woods, Wallace, Pflug, Kenney and Fromhold.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates an account as a repository for state and other monies provided to support natural science, wildlife and environmental education programs provided to schools by nonprofit organizations.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to distribute money in the account on a competitive basis to eligible nonprofit organizations that provide matching funds or in-kind services and that meet additional criteria described in the legislation.

Hearing Date: 2/10/03

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Various private entities, such as Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, the Pacific Science Center, the Washington Audubon Society, and Woodland Park Zoo, have educational outreach programs available to schools. These programs are designed to help children learn about science, wildlife, or the environment in a wide variety of ways including the development of materials for in-class curricula, field trips and out-of-school opportunities, as well as teacher training.

Under current Washington law, all schools give instruction in science with special reference to the environment. Specifically, the Washington Administrative Code requires that instruction about conservation, natural resources and the environment be provided in an interdisciplinary manner at all grade levels.

Summary of Bill:

The natural science, wildlife, and environmental education partnership account and grant program are established. The purpose of the account and of the grant program is to promote proven and innovative natural science, wildlife, and environmental education programs that are fully aligned with the state's essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). The grant program is subject to the availability of funds in the partnership account. The partnership account consists of funds provided by the Legislature or other sources. An appropriation is not required for an expenditure from the account.

Money from the account is disbursed through a competitive grant-making process to nonprofit organizations that are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code and that can provide matching funds or in-kind services. The criteria for the grants is established by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and any expenditures from the fund must be authorized by SPI or its designee. The criteria must be based on compliance with the EALRs and programs must meet at least one of the five features listed. A list of non-exclusive, eligible uses for the grants is included.

Grants may not be used for any partisan or political activities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/29/03.

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