

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5003

As of February 27, 2003

Title: An act relating to establishing the office of citizen councilor.

Brief Description: Creating the office of citizen councilor.

Sponsors: Senators Esser, Jacobsen, Horn, Thibaudeau, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/28/03.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Concern has been expressed that some Washington citizens have difficulties gaining access to the legislative process either because of the time required to come to Olympia to testify or the distances involved. It is believed that the state could benefit from additional input from these citizens if an alternate forum could be provided.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The State Auditor appoints a volunteer citizen counselor coordinator and a deputy. Their duties include: promotion of the citizen counselor program, actively encouraging volunteers, appointing group conveners, overseeing the preparation, and dissemination of data and information, distributing information to citizen counselors, maintaining data and documents generated by citizen counselor groups, and forwarding group reports to the Legislature by January 1 of each year.

Any person who lives or works in Washington can volunteer to act as a citizen counselor by application to the State Auditor and paying a fee. The fee is set at an amount that only recovers the costs of the citizen counselor program.

Citizen counselors act collectively as legislative advisers in groups convened by volunteer leaders designated by the citizen counselor coordinator. Citizen counselor groups gather information and study issues determined to be important to the citizens of the state, solicit input and comments, and file a yearly written report of their activities, conclusions, and advice.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for original bill.

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