

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 5381

As Passed Senate, March 11, 2005

Title: An act relating to the Washington academy of sciences.

Brief Description: Authorizing an independent, nonprofit Washington academy of sciences.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Parlette, McAuliffe, Pridemore, Rockefeller, Brown, Rasmussen, Schoesler, Shin, Haugen, Schmidt, Keiser and Kline; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 2/8/05, 2/21/05 [DP, DNP].

Passed Senate: 3/11/05, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Brown, Keiser and Prentice.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hewitt and Honeyford.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7483)

Background: Academies of Science are part of our Nation's history. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) was signed into being by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. Since its inception, the NAS has served to investigate, examine, experiment, and report upon any subject of science or art whenever called upon to do so by the federal government. The NAS is actually made up of four organizations. These non-profit organizations work outside the framework of government to ensure independent advice on matters of science, technology, and medicine.

There are also state level academies of science. California's Academy of Science is a private non-profit that provides scientific knowledge and expertise to visiting scientists, educators, adults, students, parents, children, conservation organizations, government leaders, and the media. The Mississippi Academy of Sciences is an organization of scientists, engineers, and others from schools and universities, government, industry and business that supports science within the state.

Summary of Bill: A Washington academy of science is created as a nonprofit organization whose principal mission is the provision of scientific analysis and recommendations referred to the academy by the Governor or the legislature, including identifying past or present research projects at Washington, or other, research institutions.

The presidents of the University of Washington and Washington State University serve as co-chairs of an organizing committee for the purpose of creating the academy. The organizing committee is to be comprised of representatives of appropriate disciplines of academic, private, governmental, and research sectors.

The timeline for the creation of the academy is as follows:

- January 1, 2006: organizing committee formed;
- April 30, 2007: committee's review is complete; and
- by April 30, 2007: academy files articles of incorporation.

The organizing committee is to recommend procedures and funding requirements for receiving and disbursing funding in support of the academy's programs and services. The report is to be made to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Senate and House of Representatives by April 30, 2007.

The bylaws or other operating guidelines are to outline procedures for selecting panels of experts to respond to Governor requests. The panel members are to avoid conflicts of interest and proposed panelists must disclose any advocacy positions or financial interest, within the past ten years, related to the research at hand.

The Governor provides funding to the academy for the actual expense of investigations, examinations, and reports. This funding is in addition to state funding assistance to the academy in its initial years of operation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Testimony For: Washington has an opportunity to be in the forefront in regards to the quality of our state's scientific research. Often the Governor, the Legislature, and the public are confronted with difficult and controversial public policy questions. Creating an Academy of Science would create an objective unbiased team of our state and nation's best scientists to come together and provide answers through an independent research institute.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Governor Gregoire; Linda Mull, WBBA; Jack Farris, WBBA; Randy Hodgins, University of Washington; Jim Peterson, Washington State University; Jerry Smedes, Northwest Environmental Council.

House Amendment(s): Two additional references to the Legislature's ability to request investigations by the Academy are inserted.

Passed House: 87-7.