

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 5609

As Passed Senate, February 14, 2006

Title: An act relating to increasing the operating fee waiver authority for Central Washington University.

Brief Description: Increasing the operating fee waiver authority for Central Washington University.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Mulliken, Keiser, Carrell, Kohl-Welles and Benson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/9/05, 2/21/05 [DP].
Passed Senate: 3/16/05, 47-1; 2/14/06, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Berkey, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Public baccalaureate institutions and community colleges may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees through approximately 35 different tuition waiver programs. Current waivers can be classified into three broad categories: state-supported waivers, discretionary waivers, and space-available waivers. With state-supported waivers, institutions receive general fund support that partially offsets the tuition not collected from the students as a result of granting the waivers. For state-supported waivers, there is a statutory cap for each institution regarding the percentage of total tuition revenue that may be waived. The waiver cap ranges from a high of 35 percent for the community colleges to a low of 6 percent for The Evergreen State College. The waiver caps were established in 1992 by the Legislature when the institutions also gained local control of their tuition revenue.

Most waiver programs are designed to help a student with particular circumstances. For example, waivers are permitted for needy students, teaching and research assistants, the children of deceased and disabled firefighters and law-enforcement individuals, and a stipulated number of international students, to name a few.

Tuition waivers are permissive and, within their respective percentage caps, each institution decides how to apportion its waiver authority among the various categories of waivers.

Summary of Bill: Central Washington University's authority to offer operating fee waivers is increased from 8 percent to 11 percent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 1, 2005.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Administration needs flexibility in terms of waiver usage and awarding financial aid. The other regional institutions have greater flexibility and Central Washington University (CWU) needs it also in order to better serve the students. This bill will also help students, especially first generation students, by making more financial aid available. There is currently a serious inequity in the waiver percentage caps as established in statute. The current percentages were established in statute as a snapshot of waiver usage in 1992 and have not changed since. Central Washington University can not compete with the other regional institutions in terms of the financial aid that it can make available and this bill would put CWU on equal footing with the other regional institutions. CWU does not want to negatively impact the other institutions; they just want equity with them.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Jimmy Berto, Lucas Westcoat, Assoc. Students of CWU; Rep. Mike Sells, CWU Board of Trustees; Ann Anderson, CWU.