

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5634

As of March 3, 2005

Title: An act relating to verification of educational credits used for certificated employee salary increases.

Brief Description: Requiring that educational credits used to increase teachers' salaries are earned at verified accredited educational institutions.

Sponsors: Senators Schoesler, Sheldon, Carrell, Stevens, Schmidt, Shin, Mulliken, Morton, Benson, Delvin, Pflug, Esser, Roach, Johnson and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 3/2/05.

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

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

Background: Professional development is ongoing formal education obtained by educators after they graduate from a teacher preparation program. There are requirements and incentives for professional development. The state legislature provides salary enhancements for educators who obtain approved credits for in-service, continuing education, or an internship that meets statutory criteria. Professional development courses are offered through colleges or universities, Educational Service Districts (ESDs), local school districts, and professional organizations, sometimes at a cost to the participant. The Legislature also provides funding to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for professional development programs. Currently, documentation for credits obtained for in-service, continuing education, or an internship are audited by the Superintendents office on a selective basis.

Summary of Bill: Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to verify credits earned by certificated staff to increase their earnings on the salary schedule. The credits must be from an accredited education institution recognized by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. Salary increases may not be awarded until the accreditation has been verified.

Certified staff who submit credits from an unaccredited institution to receive a salary increase must be fined three hundred dollars. Certificated staff who receive salary increases based upon credits earned, from an unaccredited institution, must reimburse the district for any compensation received based on those credits.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on march 1, 2005.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Phony degrees are being used to increase some teachers salaries. In Oregon this is a crime, however, it is not a crime in Washington. Some teachers are using fake degrees to get a salary increase. There needs to be some way to verify degrees. Tracking degrees is not difficult or expensive. This bill would benefit excellent teachers who deserve a higher salary.

Other: Teachers are already required to get degrees from an accredited university. Does the legislation mean just degrees or any education a teacher receives? This bill will provide problems it was not meant to cause.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Schoesler, prime sponsor; Marsha Richards, Evergreen Freedom Foundation. Concerns: Lucinda Young, WEA.