

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1279

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 15, 2007

Title: An act relating to the state poet laureate.

Brief Description: Establishing the poet laureate program.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Skinner, Kessler, Lantz, Hasegawa, Dickerson, Haler, McIntire, Conway, Newhouse and Kenney).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/05/07, 90-5.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 3/15/07 [DP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Kline and Pridemore.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Swecker.

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: A poet laureate is a poet officially appointed by a government and expected to perform various duties such as composing poems for government events or promoting the appreciation of reading and writing poetry.

Currently, 40 states have appointed a poet laureate.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Washington State Arts Commission (Commission) must establish and administer the Poet Laureate Program. A committee, appointed and coordinated by the Commission, will recommend a poet laureate for a two-year term. The Commission, with the approval of the Governor, makes the final selection. The poet laureate must be a published poet, a resident of Washington, active in the poetry community, and willing and able to promote poetry throughout the two-year term.

The poet laureate must engage in activities to promote and encourage poetry within the state and must receive compensation at a level determined by the Commission.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The poet laureate account is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. The Commission must fund the poet laureate program through gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources.

Appropriation: The sum of \$30,000 is appropriated from the General Fund.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Currently, 40 states have a poet laureate program. Washington is one of only ten states that does not. A poet laureate for our state will not only promote poetry but will also promote literacy. The appropriation in the bill is a one time appropriation to fund the campaign to promote the program. This idea has been worked on for many years. Poetry teaches children and adults to treasure the beauty of language and gives them an opportunity to express feelings and emotions. This program will require a unique set of skills and will seek out poets that represent the diversity of poetry and the state's demographics.

OTHER: The Commission already receives \$2 million per year from the state. There does not need to be an additional appropriation of \$30,000 to fund the poet laureate position. The Commission should find the resources within its current budget to fund this program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Skinner, prime sponsor; Kris Tucker, Washington State Arts Commission.

OTHER: Mary Jean Hrbacek, citizen.