
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 8405

State of Washington 61st Legislature 2009 Regular Session

By Senators Kohl-Welles, Fairley, Rockefeller, Kline, and Jacobsen

Read first time 02/03/09. Referred to Committee on Government Operations & Elections.

1 WHEREAS, An independent, creative, and competent legislature
2 distinguishes a democratic system from more authoritarian forms of
3 government; and

4 WHEREAS, Questions arise as to whether the Washington state
5 legislature is structurally, functionally, operationally, and
6 procedurally satisfactory for resolving today's complex and divisive
7 issues; and

8 WHEREAS, The structure and function of the legislature was largely
9 established when the problems and issues before it were less complex
10 than those facing legislatures of the 21st century; and

11 WHEREAS, The time demands have expanded significantly for
12 legislators as a result of increasing numbers of constituents,
13 constituent and public access to legislators, and state operating,
14 capital, and transportation budgets; and

15 WHEREAS, Legislators tend to regard their own legislature as
16 somehow incomparable, without regard to how the Washington state
17 legislature compares with other state legislatures;

18 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, By the senate of the state of
19 Washington, the house of representatives concurring, That a commission

1 be established within the legislature to evaluate its decision-making
2 capabilities based on the following categories:

3 Structure and Function (e.g., restrictions on frequency, duration,
4 length, and agendas of sessions, general purpose and size of staff,
5 facilities, provisions for management and coordination);

6 Accountability (e.g., explicit rules and procedures, adequacy of
7 information and public access to it, internal accountability);

8 Informedness (e.g., sufficient time, standing committees, interim
9 activities, professional staff resources, fiscal review capabilities);

10 Independence (e.g., frequency and duration of sessions, legislative
11 independence of executive branch, capability for effective oversight of
12 executive operations, interest groups, conflicts of interest); and

13 Representativeness (e.g., diversity and compensation); and

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That:

15 (1) The commission consist of fifteen members appointed by the
16 legislature. Four members of the senate, two from each of the two
17 major political parties, appointed by the president of the senate, and
18 four members of the house of representatives, two from each of the two
19 major political parties, appointed by the speaker of the house of
20 representatives, shall serve as members. The legislative members shall
21 appoint seven citizen members, one of whom shall be the chair. The
22 legislative members shall consider nominations for citizen membership
23 based upon maintaining a balanced and diverse distribution of
24 philosophical perspectives on the proper roles of government, society,
25 and the individual;

26 (2) All commission members serve at the pleasure of the
27 legislature. The position of any legislative member shall be deemed
28 vacated whenever such member ceases to be a member of the house from
29 which he or she was appointed. Any vacancies occurring in the
30 membership of the commission shall be filled in the same manner as the
31 original appointments;

32 (3)(a) Nonlegislative members be reimbursed for expenses incurred
33 in the performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and
34 43.03.060;

35 (b) Legislative members be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the
36 performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 44.04.120;

37 (4) A simple majority of the membership constitute a quorum for the
38 purpose of conducting business;

1 (5) In carrying out its duties, the commission may establish such
2 relationships with public and private institutions, local governments,
3 private industry, community organizations, other state legislatures,
4 and other segments of the general public as may be needed to evaluate
5 the Washington state legislature; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Washington state commission on the
7 evaluation of the legislature report to the legislature its findings
8 and recommendations by December 1, 2009; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the commission terminate on December
10 31, 2009.

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