

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5267

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to prerecorded video testimony and written testimony on pending legislation.

Brief Description: Ordering development of processes to allow prerecorded video testimony and written testimony on pending legislation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Security (originally sponsored by Senators Habib, Roach, Liias, Pearson, Keiser, Mullet and Chase; by request of Secretary of State).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 3/24/15, 4/1/15 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill
(As Amended by Committee)

- Allows the public to provide commentary on pending legislation through prerecorded videos and written statements.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Gregory and Hawkins.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The Washington State Constitution states that each house may establish its own proceedings. The House of Representatives and the Senate each adopt their own rules, and both houses have rules that allow for open public meetings at which the public is welcome to testify on proposed legislation.

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 Joint Legislative Systems Committee.

The Joint Legislative Systems Committee (Systems Committee) oversees the information processing and communications systems of the Legislature. The Systems Committee includes members from each caucus of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Among other functions, the Systems Committee is directed to plan for making legislative information available electronically, including:

- promoting and facilitating electronic access to the public of legislative information and services;
- considering electronic public access needs when planning new information systems or major upgrades of information systems;
- determining which legislative information the public most wants and needs;
- increasing capabilities to receive information electronically from the public, and transmit forms, applications and other communications and transactions electronically; and
- using technologies that allow continuous access and are easy to use, including for persons with disabilities.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Legislature's electronic comment system must be modified to allow the public to provide commentary on pending legislation through prerecorded videos and written statements. The Systems Committee may set up parameters for submission of prerecorded videos and written statements by the public. Distribution of prerecorded videos and written statements, as well as restrictions regarding inappropriate content, must be established by the House of Representatives and the Senate. The act may be known as the "Accessible Legislative Commentary Act."

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The striking amendment requires the Systems Committee to modify the electronic comment system to allow for commentary through prerecorded videos and written statements. The ability of a legislative member to request statements that contain inappropriate comment to be made available is removed. The duty regarding timely distribution of prerecorded videos and written statements and determination of inappropriate content is with the House of Representatives and the Senate, rather than the Systems Committee. The amended definition of a legislative record is removed. The name of the act is changed to the "Accessible Legislative Commentary Act."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Many Washingtonians find it difficult to travel to Olympia in order to have their voices heard. Given today's technology, there should be a way to allow people to use video cameras or websites to submit input on legislation to the Legislature. The proposed amendment makes a distinction between testimony and commentary, and allows this testimony to be read into the public record.

The bill will allow citizens to engage in their government. It is difficult for many to drive several hours to provide testimony for three minutes.

The Washington Student Association supports the bill. Student lobbying organizations send students to testify on a regular basis. However, it is somewhat limited in that students' schedules do not allow them to be away in many cases because of class schedules, exams, and other activities. The bill will help facilitate students' involvement in the process.

This bill would be a very useful tool for engaging youth and participatory democracy. The bill will allow, particularly youth that have barriers, to participate in the legislative process.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Habib, prime sponsor; Kym Wyman, Secretary of State; Emily Murphy; and Paul Bell, Office of Student Legislative Affairs at Bellevue College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.