

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8402

As of February 10, 2015

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington state commission on the evaluation of the legislature.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Roach and Liias.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/09/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: The state Legislature is made up of two houses, the Senate and House of Representatives. Washington has 49 legislative districts, each of which elects a Senator and two Representatives. Senators serve four-year terms and Representatives serve two-year terms. The Senate and House of Representatives meet in session each year to create new laws, change existing laws, and enact budgets for the state.

Sources of law for the operation of the Legislature are contained in a number of sources, including the following:

- the state Constitution;
- state statute;
- the Joint Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives; and
- individual rules of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Summary of Bill: The Commission on the evaluation of the Legislature is established to evaluate the Legislature's decisionmaking capabilities. It consists of 15 members appointed by the Legislature:

- four members each from the Senate and House of Representatives; and
- seven citizen members appointed by the legislative members, one of whom must be chair.

The Commission's evaluation must include analysis of the Legislature's

- structure and function, including staffing, facilities, and session length and frequency;
- accountability, including rules, procedures, and adequacy of access to information;
- informedness, including committees and interim activities;

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.

- independence, including the relationship with the executive branch; and
- representativeness, including diversity and compensation.

Administrative provisions are included for travel reimbursement and outreach to public and private entities. The Commission's findings and recommendations are due to the Legislature by December 1, 2016.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Washington has a relatively short session compared to many other states. It is time to evaluate things like Washington's session length, staffing, and whether the Legislature is able to adequately function as a part-time entity.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor.