

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2837

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**As Passed House:**  
February 19, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to expanding powers granted to state historical societies.

**Brief Description:** Expanding powers granted to state historical societies.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Boehnke and Hudgins; by request of Washington State Historical Society.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government & Tribal Relations: 2/5/20, 2/7/20 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/19/20, 98-0.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Permits state historical societies (Societies) to provide grants to support various programs and activities.
- Authorizes Societies to adopt rules.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Gregerson, Chair; Pellicciotti, Vice Chair; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Dolan, Hudgins, Mosbrucker and Smith.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Walsh, Ranking Minority Member.

**Staff:** Carrington Skinner (786-7192).

**Background:**

Washington's two state historical societies (Societies), the Washington State Historical Society and the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, are designated as trustees for

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the state. The Societies must maintain and preserve articles and properties that illustrate the history of the state for the use and benefit of the people of the state.

Among other powers and duties, the Societies:

- collect, catalog, preserve, and interpret objects, sites, and other materials illustrative of the cultural, artistic, and natural history of the state;
- operate state museums;
- plan for and conduct celebrations of significant events in Washington; and
- engage in fundraising activities.

The Eastern Washington State Historical Society operates the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture in Spokane and the Joel E. Ferris Research Archives. The Washington State Historical Society operates the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma, serves as the managing agency for the Women's History Consortium, and oversees the Capital Heritage Project program that provides funding from the state capital budget through grants for public history, heritage, and preservation projects.

Each Society's governing board appoints a director with the consent of the Governor. Budget requests must be submitted to the Washington State Heritage Council for review and comment.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Societies may provide grants at their discretion to cultural and historical organizations for:

- organizational capacity building;
- public programming;
- educational programming;
- outreach;
- collections management; and
- exhibitions.

The Societies are permitted to adopt rules under the Administrative Procedures Act to carry out policies and purposes related to their powers and duties.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) As the saying goes, if we fail to learn from history, we are condemned to repeat it, so it is important to support institutions where people can see the rich history of the State of Washington. The bill gives the Washington State Historical Society the explicit authority to make operating grants to support programs, outreach, and capacity building for heritage

organizations that desperately need it. The funding for the grants will come from earned and contributed income. This bill will provide gateway grants, which can help organizations build capacity that will allow them to access other sources of funding. Small historical organizations would appreciate another opportunity for grants to help with collections, exhibits, and educational materials that would then be passed on to the community.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Boehnke, prime sponsor; Jennifer Kilmer, Washington State Historical Society; Chris Moore, Washington Trust for Historic Preservation; and Marianne Bull, Steilacoom Historical Museum Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.