
**State Government & Tribal Relations
Committee**

HB 2899

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington state civil rights trail program.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, Valdez, Bergquist, Peterson, Ryu, Santos, Springer, Morgan, Davis and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Washington State Civil Rights Trail Program (Program), under the direction of the Washington State Historical Society (Society), to commemorate sites important to understanding civil rights in Washington and the United States.
- Creates a Trail Site Advisory Board (Board) to assist the Society in managing the Program.
- Requires the Society and Board to establish processes for recognizing trail sites and to rank projects for Capital Budget funding to establish, preserve, or improve sites.

Hearing Date: 2/12/20

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

Washington has two state historical societies: the Washington State Historical Society and the Eastern Washington State Historical Society. The societies are required to 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.

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 Washington State Historical Society (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.

The Capital Heritage Project awards grants to nonprofit heritage organizations, tribal governments, and local governments to defray up to 33 percent of the capital costs of facilities that interpret and preserve Washington's history and heritage. The Society conducts a statewide competitive grant process every two years to solicit heritage project proposals. An advisory board consisting of representatives from the Washington Museum Association, the Office of the Secretary of State, the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation establishes program guidelines and reviews and ranks project proposals.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington State Civil Rights Trail Program (Program) is created under the direction of the Society and the Civil Rights Trail Site Advisory Board (Board). The purpose of the Program is to commemorate sites important to understanding civil rights in Washington and the United States. The two components of the Program are recognizing civil rights trail sites and providing site recognition awards.

The Society and Board must establish a process for recognizing civil rights trail sites through which applicants may submit sites for consideration. To be eligible, the site must meet minimum criteria for historic and civil rights significance established by the Society. Consideration of new sites must begin with recognizing locations of African American significance in relation to Black History Month. The Society also must consider existing civil rights historical markers in need of updating.

The Civil Rights Trail Site Award Program (Award Program) is created to provide funding for site markers, interpretive signs, site preservation, or site acquisition. The Society must annually submit a Capital Budget request that includes a ranked list of qualified eligible projects for which applications were received. Legislative approval is required before the Society signs contracts or otherwise financially obligates funds under the Award Program. Certain contractual provisions for the Award Program contracts are specified.

The Board is created to include the director of the Society and members representing a number of state commissions such as the Commission on African American Affairs and the Women's Commission. Other members include representatives from the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the University of Washington, and a labor history organization.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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