

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5196

As of January 27, 2021

Title: An act relating to how the legislature may convene a special session.

Brief Description: Describing how the legislature may convene a special session.

Sponsors: Senators Billig, Braun, Fortunato, Holy, Hunt, Van De Wege, Wagoner and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 1/27/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Sets procedures for the Legislature to call a special session, including requiring resolutions to pass through the Rules Committee of each chamber with majority approval and each full chamber with approval of a two-thirds supermajority.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Washington State Legislature meets every year in regular session, beginning on the second Monday in January. In odd-numbered years, a regular session lasts up to 105 consecutive days; in even-numbered years, up to 60 consecutive days.

The Legislature may also meet in special legislative session for up to 30 consecutive days. Special legislative sessions may be called by the Governor, via proclamation, or, while the Legislature is in session or during any legislative interim, by the vote of two-thirds of each legislative chamber. If a special legislative session is convened via gubernatorial proclamation, the proclamation must state the purpose or purposes of the session, but those purposes are not binding upon the Legislature.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

If the Legislature convenes a special legislative session by resolution, the resolution must specify the purpose or purposes for the special legislative session, and the Legislature may only consider matters germane to the purpose or purposes stated in that resolution without the consent of two-thirds of each chamber. The Legislature may adopt procedures for calling a special legislative session by law or resolution.

Summary of Bill: Procedures are set in statute for the Legislature to convene a special session.

A proposed resolution setting the date, time, and purposes for convening the session may be introduced in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, and must be referred to that chamber's Rules Committee. Upon approval by a majority of the Rules Committee, the resolution advances to the full chamber. A resolution must be approved by a two-thirds supermajority vote of one chamber to pass to the other chamber.

If both chambers pass the resolution with a two-thirds supermajority vote in accordance with these procedures, a special legislative session will be called in accordance with the terms of the resolution.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Legislature has never called itself into special session, but the right to do so is an important part of the balance of power between branches of government. Joint Rules with the House of Representatives have set these exact procedures in the past, but there have been times where the Legislature has not adopted Joint Rules. This ensures that the Legislature can exercise its constitutional duty if Joint Rules are not adopted.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Andy Billig, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.