

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6168

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As of January 18, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to renewing Washington's international leadership.

**Brief Description:** Renewing Washington's international leadership.

**Sponsors:** Senators Stanford, Frame, Nobles and Wellman.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Business, Financial Services, Gaming & Trade: 1/18/24.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes new and modified statutory duties and expands authority of the Office of International Relations and Protocol (OIRP).
- Requires OIRP to develop a strategic international engagement plan.
- Establishes that the OIRP is responsible for determining jurisdictions of strategic importance.
- Increases the number of legislative members on the Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations from 12 to 16.
- Creates an Interparliamentary Exchange with British Columbia.
- Removes the prohibition on reimbursing travel and lodging expenses from the Legislative International Trade Account.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS, FINANCIAL SERVICES, GAMING & TRADE

**Staff:** Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

**Background:** The Office of International Relations and Protocol. The Office of International Relations and Protocol (OIRP), under the Office of the Governor, was created

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by legislation in 1991. It serves as the state's official liaison and protocol office with foreign governments. The OIRP may create temporary advisory committees to deal with specific international issues. The OIRP is led by a director, appointed by the Governor.

Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations. The Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations (LCEDIR) was created by legislation in 1985. It studies and reviews economic development issues with a special emphasis in international trade, tourism, investment, and industrial development, and assisting the Legislature in developing a comprehensive and consistent economic development policy. LCEDIR is led by the Lieutenant Governor and consists of 12 legislative members, 6 from each chamber, each equally representing the two caucuses.

Funding for LCEDIR travel costs, excluding lodging and travel, may come from the Legislative International Trade Account (Account). Authorization for expenditure requires the signed approval of the Chief Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, and the President of the Senate—Lieutenant Governor. Expenses incurred by LCEDIR, including salaries and expenses of employees, must be paid through voucher forms and signed by the chairperson or vice chairperson of the committee and attested by the secretary of the committee.

**Summary of Bill:** The Office of International Relations and Protocol. Strategic Plan. The OIRP must develop a strategic international engagement plan to guide Washington State's international engagement and economic development. The OIRP may consult with relevant public and private entities when developing a plan. A complete strategic plan must be completed by July 1, 2025. Every two and a half years, the strategic plan must undergo a review to measure progress and outcomes with an update every five years.

*Authority.* The OIRP's authority is updated. The OIRP may:

- create advisory committees as necessary;
- designate foreign jurisdictions, such as national governments, subnational governments, and international organizations, as jurisdictions of strategic importance; and
- establish procedures and requirements for operations and expenditures to support and enhance state government partnerships and relationships with foreign jurisdictions.

*Duties.* The OIRP is required to advise and coordinate with certain elected officials on international developments pertaining to the state as well as support engagement between foreign governments, build government-to-government relationships, coordinate protocol for visiting foreign dignitaries, designate an international engagement advisory committee, assist institutions of higher education in implementing international programs, improve coordination with the Washington Tourism Authority, and establish an international exchange between the state and British Columbia.

*Countries of Strategic Importance.* The duty to determine 15 foreign jurisdictions of

strategic importance to the development and diversification of Washington State's international relations is moved to OIRP from the Department of Commerce. Certain factors must be considered when designating such jurisdictions including partnership in key industrial sectors, the presence of international trade offices or other program-based engagement conducted by state agencies, and historic or existing bilateral agreements, among others.

The Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations. Additional Members Added. An additional four members are added to LCEDIR, two from each chamber representing a member of the opposite caucus.

*Interparliamentary Exchange with British Columbia.* Under the general provisions of the Legislature, an Interparliamentary Exchange with British Columbia is created, represented by the chair of LCEDIR. The purpose is to facilitate legislator-to-legislator communication between the two governments. LCEDIR is also required to cooperate, act, and function with similar entities to LCEDIR of the provinces and territories of Canada.

*Travel and Lodging Costs.* Travel and lodging are an allowable use of funds from the Account. Authorization from the Chief Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate is no longer required for expenditures from the Account.

*Vouchers for expenses.* The requirement that all expenses incurred by LCEDIR, including salaries and expenses of employees, be paid by voucher is repealed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** Yes.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill began last session. It is vitally important that we pay attention to international trade with other countries, and need to be deliberate with how we approach it. The Lieutenant Governor supports the bill as written. Washington is the most trade driven state in the nation. This work benefits all businesses in Washington. This bill establishes an interparliamentary exchange group with British Columbia (BC). Washington and BC's economies are intertwined. Adding members to LCEDIR has bipartisan support, as does creating the interparliamentary exchange. International engagement is essential to WA's economic development and affects many sectors. This bill makes important and timely updates for the 21st century, supporting and strengthening international partnerships. It will strengthen leadership in the private sectors, as we compete for international business in critical industries. Washington's international exports and foreign-directed investment are the reason we are envied by other

states. Other states are now stepping up their efforts in international trade. It is important Washington bring focus on our leadership in international relationships, and this bill does that.

Our entity recently went on a trade mission with the Governor's Office. We were able to participate in conversations on nuclear waste and meet companies looking to set up manufacturing in Washington. This program helps facilitate conversations with international businesses that may not have happened otherwise. There is an urgent need to update the legislative plan for international relations. This bill represents our commitment to international affairs, and reflects the voices needed to the state's well-being. Strengthening Canadian legislative committee relationships and participating in an interparliamentary exchange will help our economic and international partnership with our neighbor. The development of the strategic plan, and required update every 5 years, will ensure Washington stays up to date on international affairs. This bill will help the Port of Seattle expand into new markets. Washington is in the top five for states' exports, and 8th in total value for exports. International trade supports Washington jobs. Government to government relationships will be bolstered by this bill, particularly with BC.

CON: Washington State pays for 15 different international public policy banjos. This does not include the costs for when a legislator wants to take an international trip. What about the carbon footprint of these trips? You need environmental policy language in this bill. This bill needs to be consolidated. This Office has been polluting for free since 1991.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Derek Stanford, Prime Sponsor; James Rolph, The Lieutenant Governor's Office; Geoffrey Potter, Office of Governor Jay Inslee; Schuyler Hoss, Former Director of International Relations and Protocol; Karl Dye, TRIDEC; Lydia Faitalia, Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs; John Flanagan, Port of Seattle; Amy Anderson, Association of Washington Business.

CON: John Worthington.

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