

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SCR 8414

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As of January 16, 2024

**Brief Description:** Creating a joint select committee on civic health.

**Sponsors:** Senators Lovick, Torres, Billig, Boehnke, Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Frame, Holy, Hunt, Keiser, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Muzzall, Nguyen, Nobles, Pedersen, Rivers, Saldaña, Shewmake, Stanford, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J.; by request of Lieutenant Governor.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government & Elections: 1/16/24.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes the Joint Select Committee on Civic Health to build upon the work of the Project for Civic Health.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Greg Vogel (786-7413)

**Background:** In partnership with the University of Washington Evans School, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, and the Ruckelshaus Center, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor established the Project for Civic Health. The project seeks to bring together people who are concerned about civic health, to improve governance, to develop practical and transformative ideas, and to create public accountability.

The project began by convening roundtable discussions in five Washington counties with elected officials and community leaders. The roundtable discussions have been formalized into a report titled Common Ground for the Common Good.

Following the report, community and political leaders from across Washington gathered as part of a Civic Health Project Summit on October 19, 2023. The purpose of the summit was

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to think through how to uncover shared objectives and build ways to strengthen abilities to debate, discuss, and develop better solutions to civic health issues.

**Summary of Bill:** A Joint Select Committee on Civic Health is established to build upon the work of the Project for Civic health. The committee must consist of 13 members:

- three members of the majority party and three members of the minority party of the Senate, to be selected by the President of the Senate;
- three members of the majority party and three members of the minority party of the House of Representatives, to be selected by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- the Lieutenant Governor.

The Lieutenant Governor must serve as the chair of the committee and one member of the majority party and one member of the minority party from opposite chambers must serve as vice chairs.

The committee must operate in full accordance with joint rules of the Legislature.

All expenses and hiring of additional staff is subject to approval of the House of Representatives Executive Rules Committee and the Senate Facilities and Operations Committee.

The committee will issue its preliminary recommendations and report to the Legislature prior to the 2025 regular session and its final recommendations and report prior to the 2026 regular session, at which time the committee must cease to exist.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 9, 2024.

**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: Being an American involves the embrace of high ideals and civic responsibility. That is the work we hope to accomplish with this resolution. Americans believe civility is a problem, many are concerned about the future of our democracy, and some have even ceased talking to a friend or family member because of politics. We need the Legislature's help. Many of the causes of civic disfunction may warrant legislative action, your examination, for example, enhanced civic education, improved training for local elected officials, or supporting local journalism. Our Legislature is a good example of how people can treat each other with respect in the public square.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator John Lovick, Prime Sponsor; Elizabeth Doll; Jodi

Sandfort, Evans School of Public Policy & Governance, UW, Dean; Denny Heck, Lieutenant Governor.

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