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**SENATE BILL 5523**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Riccelli, Lovelett, Slatter, Nobles, Kauffman, Warnick, Trudeau, Hasegawa, Saldaña, Valdez, Wellman, and C. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to the role of students on the governing boards of institutions of higher education; amending RCW 28B.50.100 and 28B.50.102; adding a new section to chapter 28B.50 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.35 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.20 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.30 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.40 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that decisions made by governing boards of each respective institution of higher education greatly impact the lives of students and that student participation in the decision-making process can provide insight into the impacts of actions by trustees that are not always measurable through reports and statistics. Students are on campus every day using services and experiencing aspects of the institution that board members may only see on paper, providing a unique and valuable perspective that should not be overlooked.

Students serving on governing boards of institutions of higher education have proven effective in Washington and in over 30 other states. For nearly 30 years, students at Washington's four-year institutions of higher education have served as voting members on the board of trustees and regents. Students also serve with voting rights on both the Washington student achievement council and the workforce education investment accountability and oversight board. These opportunities have provided greater depth in board deliberations and a well-educated conduit for students to voice ideas and concerns.

The student perspective at community colleges also brings the board closer to their community. Student populations at community colleges are the most diverse of any institution of higher education in the state. Being on campus and in class every day, students are exposed to a more diverse group than any member of the board representing any one group of the community. Student positions on governing boards are also a valuable tool for developing leadership through experiential learning. Student members learn processes of institutional governance, become involved in campus projects, analyze policy proposals, and participate in board discussions and decision making. While some student leaders are given the opportunity to report directly to the board, this is vastly different from having a right to discussion and the opportunity to vote on matters important to the student body.

It is the intent of the legislature to enhance community college governance by fostering a more dynamic relationship between students and institutions through the encouragement of student participation in policy development and decision making at the district and state level.

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.50.100 and 2013 c 23 s 58 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) There is hereby created a board of trustees for each college district as set forth in this chapter. Each board of trustees shall be composed of ((~~five~~)) six trustees, ((~~except as provided in~~)) including a student trustee pursuant to RCW 28B.50.102, who shall be appointed by the governor for terms commencing October 1st of the year in which appointed. In making such appointments, the governor shall give consideration to geographical diversity, and representing labor, business, women, and racial and ethnic minorities, in the membership of the boards of trustees. The boards of trustees for districts containing technical colleges shall include at least one member from business and one member from labor.

(2) The successors of the trustees initially appointed shall be appointed by the governor to serve for a term of five years except that any person appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of any term shall be appointed only for the remainder of the term. Each member shall serve until a successor is appointed and qualified.

(3) Every trustee shall be a resident and qualified elector of the college district. No trustee may be an employee of the community and technical college system, a member of the board of directors of any school district, or a member of the governing board of any public or private educational institution.

(4) Each board of trustees shall organize itself by electing a chair from its members. The board shall adopt a seal and may adopt such bylaws, rules, and regulations as it deems necessary for its own government. ((~~Three~~)) A majority of members of the board shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may adjourn from time to time and may compel the attendance of absent members in such manner as prescribed in its bylaws, rules, or regulations. The district president, or if there be none, the president of the college, shall serve as, or may designate another person to serve as, the secretary of the board, who shall not be deemed to be a member of the board.

(5) Each board of trustees shall follow procedures for open public meetings in chapter 42.30 RCW. Each board shall provide time for public comment at each meeting.

(6) Members of the boards of trustees may be removed for misconduct or malfeasance in office in the manner provided by RCW 28B.10.500.

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.50.102 and 2012 c 148 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Boards of trustees for each college district((~~, by majority vote, may~~)) shall establish a sixth trustee that shall be filled by a student. The governor shall select each student member from a list of candidates, of at least three and not more than five, submitted by the associated student governments or their equivalent of the college district. The student member shall hold his or her office for a term of one year, beginning July 1st and ending June 30th, or until the student member's successor is appointed and qualified, whichever is later. The student member shall be a full-time student in good standing at a college within the college district at the time of appointment and throughout the student's term. If the student member fails to be enrolled at the college full‑time or forfeits his or her academic standing, the student member is disqualified and a new student member must be appointed.

(2) A student appointed under this section shall excuse himself or herself from participation or voting on matters relating to the hiring, discipline, or tenure of faculty members and personnel or any other matters pertaining to collective bargaining agreements.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.50 RCW to read as follows:

A student government representative shall be given an opportunity to provide an in-person report at each regular board of trustees meeting.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.35 RCW to read as follows:

A student government representative shall be given an opportunity to provide an in-person report at each regular board of trustees meeting.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.20 RCW to read as follows:

A student government representative shall be given an opportunity to provide an in-person report at each regular board of regents meeting.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.30 RCW to read as follows:

A student government representative shall be given an opportunity to provide an in-person report at each regular board of regents meeting.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.40 RCW to read as follows:

A student government representative shall be given an opportunity to provide an in-person report at each regular board of trustees meeting.

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