
SENATE BILL 5523

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

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

Read first time 01/27/25. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to the role of students on the governing boards
2 of institutions of higher education; amending RCW 28B.50.100 and
3 28B.50.102; adding a new section to chapter 28B.50 RCW; adding a new
4 section to chapter 28B.35 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.20
5 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.30 RCW; adding a new section
6 to chapter 28B.40 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that decisions made
9 by governing boards of each respective institution of higher
10 education greatly impact the lives of students and that student
11 participation in the decision-making process can provide insight into
12 the impacts of actions by trustees that are not always measurable
13 through reports and statistics. Students are on campus every day
14 using services and experiencing aspects of the institution that board
15 members may only see on paper, providing a unique and valuable
16 perspective that should not be overlooked.

17 Students serving on governing boards of institutions of higher
18 education have proven effective in Washington and in over 30 other
19 states. For nearly 30 years, students at Washington's four-year
20 institutions of higher education have served as voting members on the
21 board of trustees and regents. Students also serve with voting rights

1 on both the Washington student achievement council and the workforce
2 education investment accountability and oversight board. These
3 opportunities have provided greater depth in board deliberations and
4 a well-educated conduit for students to voice ideas and concerns.

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

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

24 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.50.100 and 2013 c 23 s 58 are each amended to
25 read as follows:

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

37 (2) The successors of the trustees initially appointed shall be
38 appointed by the governor to serve for a term of five years except
39 that any person appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the

1 expiration of any term shall be appointed only for the remainder of
2 the term. Each member shall serve until a successor is appointed and
3 qualified.

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

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

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

22 (6) Members of the boards of trustees may be removed for
23 misconduct or malfeasance in office in the manner provided by RCW
24 28B.10.500.

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

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

1 academic standing, the student member is disqualified and a new
2 student member must be appointed.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
8 RCW to read as follows:

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

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.35
13 RCW to read as follows:

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

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.20
18 RCW to read as follows:

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

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.30
23 RCW to read as follows:

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

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.40
28 RCW to read as follows:

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

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