
SENATE BILL 5744

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Hasegawa, Chapman, Nobles, Stanford, and Trudeau

Read first time 02/13/25. Referred to Committee on State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections.

1 AN ACT Relating to requiring the joint legislative audit and
2 review committee to conduct a legislative comparison study; creating
3 new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The world is changing faster than the laws
6 of the state of Washington can keep up with. Due to the volume of
7 bills each legislative session, there is little time for robust
8 analysis and consideration of bills by members of the legislature.
9 This results in reactionary changes that create temporary and often
10 ill-considered patches in law. Finite legislative time during session
11 is consumed with short-term solutions to address current emergent
12 issues, leaving little time to provide long-term planning for the
13 future of Washington state.

14 Citizen legislatures are intended to be composed of everyday
15 people who create laws that govern everyday people. Everyday working
16 people, however, cannot afford to take time away from their
17 employment to be legislators. Often, employers will not hire or
18 retain employees who are not able to reliably show up every day and
19 perform their job duties year round. Consequently, candidates for the
20 legislature must have an employer who is willing to give sufficient
21 time off to perform their legislative duties. Furthermore, candidates

1 for the legislature must have sufficient personal resources to
2 perform their legislative duties, which leaves low income and
3 historically disenfranchised citizens without a voice in their
4 governance. Legislators and their families are asked to make great
5 sacrifices for the benefit of the people. Consequently, the
6 possibility of running for the legislature and serving as a
7 legislator is not a reality for most working people and the
8 legislature becomes overweighed by members who do have personal
9 resources or jobs with an employer who is willing to give enough time
10 off to perform legislative duties because they know the benefits of
11 having an employee with their perspective making laws.

12 We all have a vision for the possibilities of the future of the
13 state of Washington, but time constraints imposed by the
14 constitutionally mandated 105 days for a budget writing session and
15 60 days for an off-year session considerably diminish the
16 legislature's ability to find thoughtful solutions to today's issues
17 let alone work toward a vision for the future of Washington state.

18 Therefore, the legislature intends for the joint legislative
19 audit and review committee to study transforming Washington state's
20 current part-time legislature into a full-time legislature.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The joint legislative audit and review
22 committee shall review the Washington state legislature's structure,
23 demographics, and operations and provide comparison to other state
24 legislatures, with a focus on representation, barriers to
25 participation, and the impact of legislative schedules on effective
26 oversight and responsiveness to constituents.

27 (2) The joint legislative audit and review committee shall
28 conduct a comparative review of Washington's legislature in relation
29 to other states, which must address:

30 (a) Classification of legislatures as full time, part time, or
31 hybrid;

32 (b) Legislative calendars and session lengths, and potential
33 administrative efficiencies offered by various models;

34 (c) Size, composition, and partisan or nonpartisan nature of
35 legislative staff and their relative abilities to accomplish a
36 detailed analysis of legislative proposals for the different
37 classifications of legislatures in (a) of this subsection during
38 legislative sessions, and their relative abilities to provide well-
39 vetted advice to legislators regarding multiple options toward

1 possible solutions to problems legislators may be working on while in
2 legislative session;

3 (d) Legislator compensation, including salary and benefits;

4 (e) Restrictions, if any, on legislator communication with
5 constituents;

6 (f) Rates and patterns of legislative turnover; and

7 (g) Amount of time legislators spend outside of legislative
8 session for part-time legislators performing legislative duties
9 including, but not limited to, statutory committees, joint
10 legislative committees, task forces, oversight committees and other
11 nonstatutory committees, legislative-related boards and commissions,
12 and advisory groups.

13 (3) The joint legislative audit and review committee shall
14 conduct a comparison of the demographic characteristics of the
15 Washington state legislature to those of Washington's general
16 population, including but not limited to:

17 (a) Race and ethnicity, disaggregated to the greatest extent
18 practicable;

19 (b) Gender;

20 (c) Income and wealth levels;

21 (d) Education levels; and

22 (e) Other relevant demographic factors.

23 (4) If data was not available to make a detailed analysis as
24 required in subsection (3) of this section, that should be explained
25 and discussed in the final report.

26 (5) If disparities are found in the review required in subsection
27 (1) of this section, the joint legislative audit and review committee
28 shall identify potential barriers to a more representative
29 legislature, such as compensation, session schedules, or other
30 factors.

31 (6) The joint legislative audit and review committee shall
32 evaluate the level of oversight provided by the Washington state
33 legislature and how it compares to states with differing legislative
34 calendars and schedules. This analysis shall include, but not be
35 limited to:

36 (a) The number and types of hearings conducted throughout the
37 year;

38 (b) The frequency and depth of legislative engagement with
39 executive agencies and other stakeholders; and

1 (c) Identification of any challenges and best practices for more
2 effective legislative oversight.

3 (7) The joint legislative audit and review committee shall
4 evaluate the Washington state legislature's ability to respond to
5 constituent needs, including but not limited to:

6 (a) Mechanisms for year-round constituent communication;

7 (b) Responding to natural disasters, health, and other public
8 emergencies; and

9 (c) Identifying any challenges and best practices for more timely
10 and effective responses to constituents and emergencies.

11 (8) The joint legislative audit and review committee shall report
12 its findings to the legislature by December 1, 2027.

13 (9) This section expires January 1, 2028.

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