
Capital Budget Committee

HB 2058

Brief Description: Administering the Washington talking book and Braille library.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, McDermott, McIntire, Ormsby, Lantz and Santos; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Transfers the assets and operations related to the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library from the City of Seattle to the State of Washington.

Hearing Date: 2/27/07

Staff: Nona Snell (786-7153).

Background:

The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) provides statewide public library services to residents who cannot read print material because of blindness, learning disabilities, or physical disabilities.

By statute, the Washington State Library and state librarian are under the domain of the Secretary of State's office, and the state librarian is responsible for providing library and information services to residents of the state who are blind and/or physically disabled. Since the early 1970s, these duties have been fulfilled by contracting with the City of Seattle's (City) Public Library to operate the WTBBL. The WTBBL is located on Ninth Avenue in downtown Seattle.

The 1992 Supplemental Capital Budget appropriated \$1.9 million for the acquisition and renovation of space for the WTBBL under the condition that the facility be operated, managed, and maintained by the Seattle Public Library. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) was required to study the benefits and costs associated with Seattle Public Library ownership compared to state ownership of the facility and develop contractual conditions for the potential transfer of ownership to the Seattle Public Library. Based on the results of the study, OFM was allowed to authorize the transfer of ownership of the library facility from the Department of General Administration to the Seattle Public Library.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The 1993-95 Capital Budget appropriated an additional \$1.4 million for the acquisition and renovation of space for the WTBBB under the conditions that the facility acquired be owned, operated, managed, and maintained by the City and the appropriation would complete the state's capital obligation for the facility. The proviso required that, in accepting the ownership of the facility and the renovation funding, the City agreed to provide rent-free space for the WTBBB equal to the same amount as the library currently occupied for as long as the state contracted services from the Seattle Public Library.

The state appropriated a total of \$3.3 million for the acquisition and renovation of the facility located on Ninth Avenue in Seattle.

In June 1993, the state and City signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the purchase of the facility on Ninth Avenue in Seattle. The agreement includes the City and state's responsibilities with regard to the facility.

Since the 2001-03 biennium, the Secretary of State's contract with the City to operate the WTBBB has been \$2.7 million per biennia.

The Secretary of State and the City jointly contracted with a consultant in 2003-05 and 2005-07 to evaluate alternative governance options and to identify and analyze issues associated with transitioning the WTBBB operations to the Washington State Library.

The Secretary of State agreed to assume responsibilities for the WTBBB. The Secretary of State and the City have agreed to negotiate a contract extension for the Seattle Public Library to operate the WTBBB through June 30, 2008.

A Transition Advisory Board (Board) has been established by the Secretary of State to advise them and the State Library on service priorities and delivery to be addressed to achieve a successful transition. Members of the Board include representatives from WTBBB's Patron Advisory Council (including a Washington Council of the Blind representative), National Federation of the Blind President, Department of Services for the Blind Director, State School for the Blind Superintendent, Governor's Committee on Disabilities and Employment, local public library representatives (Whitman County, Kelso, Timberland Regional Library in Thurston, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, and Pacific Counties), and WTBBB staff members.

Summary of Bill:

The title to or all interest in real estate and all other assets, including the facilities and equipment purchased with state or federal funds for the WTBBB is transferred from the City to the state. The Attorney General is directed to prepare a deed in the name of the state conveying all of the rights, title, and interest in the WTBBB real estate, and the Secretary of State must file the deed in the King County recorder's office.

The Secretary of State may not sell, lease, rent, or dispose of the property transferred from the City for a minimum of five years after the effective date of the bill.

The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library account, a non-appropriated account, is created for proceeds from the sale or lease of the WTBBB property. Interest earned is retained in the account. Expenditures from the account may only be made for a facility to house WTBBB, for one-time costs associated with transitioning the WTBBB from the City to the state, and to

supplement or expand library services to the blind and physically handicapped population not otherwise funded through state general fund appropriations.

The June 1993 Memorandum of Understanding signed by the City and the state is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.