
SENATE BILL 6039

State of Washington 60th Legislature 2007 Regular Session

By Senators Kline, Weinstein, Shin, Kohl-Welles, Hobbs, Kauffman, Rockefeller, Kilmer, Murray, Delvin, Marr, McAuliffe, Jacobsen and Tom

Read first time 02/15/2007. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to the University of Washington school of law
2 public service legal loan repayment assistance program; adding a new
3 section to chapter 28B.20 RCW; creating a new section; and making
4 appropriations.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** It is the intent of the legislature to
7 provide access to legal education and to improve access to the justice
8 system for the residents of the state of Washington. Until 2006, the
9 University of Washington law school was the only law school in the
10 state and one of only a few top ranked public law schools that did not
11 have a loan repayment assistance program in place for graduates who
12 enter public interest law. The nationwide decline in the percentage of
13 new lawyers choosing to enter public interest law fields, from five and
14 four-tenths percent to two and nine-tenths percent in the last thirty
15 years, can be substantially attributed to dramatic increases in higher
16 education debt coupled with wide discrepancies between public and
17 private salaries for new lawyers. Today, more than three-quarters of
18 all low-income households in Washington experience at least one civil

1 legal problem each year. Low-income residents face more than eighty-
2 five percent of their legal problems without help from an attorney.

3 In 2006 the University of Washington law school established a loan
4 repayment assistance program to provide graduates who pursue careers in
5 public interest legal positions with payment assistance toward their
6 student loan debt. However, while the structure is in place, the
7 program lacks the resources and accountability measures to allow it to
8 be effective in its purpose. Therefore, the legislature finds that it
9 is in the best interest of the state to contribute funding to the loan
10 repayment assistance program endowment fund at the University of
11 Washington law school. It is the intent of this act to provide for the
12 partial or full repayment of educational loans of University of
13 Washington law school graduates who provide legal services in a public
14 service area of the law within Washington state.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.20 RCW
16 to read as follows:

17 The appropriation of funds from the general fund to the University
18 of Washington school of law public service legal loan repayment
19 assistance program is subject to the following requirements:

20 (1) The University of Washington law school shall report to the
21 legislature by December 1, 2008, and every two years thereafter, with
22 information about the loan repayment assistance program. The report
23 shall contain at least the following information:

24 (a) A financial summary of the endowment fund;

25 (b) The amounts and sources of funds received;

26 (c) The number of individuals receiving assistance from the program
27 and information related to the positions in which these individuals are
28 working;

29 (d) Efforts being undertaken to increase the amount of the
30 endowment fund;

31 (e) Any available information regarding the effect of the loan
32 repayment assistance program on student recruitment and enrollment; and

33 (f) Other information the school of law deems relevant to the
34 evaluation of the program.

35 (2) In its rules for administering the program, the school of law
36 must make provision for cases of hardship or exceptional circumstances,

1 as defined by the school of law. Examples of such circumstances
2 include, but are not limited to, family leave, medical leave, illness
3 or disability, and loss of employment.

4 (3) The loan repayment assistance program must be available to
5 otherwise eligible graduates of the law school who work in positions
6 with nonprofit organizations or government agencies. Such positions
7 must be located within Washington state. Government agencies shall
8 include the various branches of the military.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The sum of five hundred thousand
10 dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for
11 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, from the general fund to the
12 University of Washington school of law loan repayment assistance
13 program endowment fund for the purposes of this act.

14 (2) A sum equal to the total amount contributed to the University
15 of Washington school of law loan repayment assistance program endowment
16 fund from private sources subsequent to the effective date of this
17 section, up to a maximum of five hundred thousand dollars, is
18 appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, from the general
19 fund to the University of Washington school of law loan repayment
20 assistance program endowment fund for the purposes of this act.

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