

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1949

As of February 22, 2010

Title: An act relating to appointing student members on the board of trustees for community colleges.

Brief Description: Allowing appointment of student members on the boards of trustees of community colleges.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Liias, Sells, Hasegawa, Upthegrove, Quall, Conway, Simpson and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/13/10, 74-14.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/19/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The Higher Education Coordinating Board, University of Washington, Washington State University, the regional universities, and The Evergreen State College all have student members on their Boards of Trustees or Boards of Regents. There are no student members on the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) or on the boards for any of the community college districts. There are no enumerated qualifications for board members at any of the institutions of higher education.

The governing boards at community and technical colleges have five trustees, and at technical colleges the boards must include at least one member from business and another from labor. No trustee may be an employee of the community or 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.

Summary of Bill: Boards for each of Washington's community and technical college districts may, by majority vote, choose to expand the board for that district to six in order to seat a student member on the board. In the event that a district's board votes to authorize this student position, the Governor selects the student member from a list of three to five candidates submitted by the associated student governments, or their equivalent, of that district.

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 student selected must be a full-time student in good standing in that district at the time of appointment. A student member serves for a term of one year, or until a successor is appointed, whichever is later. The student member must excuse himself or herself from participation or voting on matters relating to the hiring, discipline, or tenure of faculty members and personnel.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Bellevue College supports the student's efforts with some concerns about specific language (addressed in the amendment). Many community college students enter with significant life experiences. The permissive language allows boards to decide what to do. Community college students deserve equal treatment with four-year college students. Students at four-year institutions have done this successfully for ten years. Students are immersed in the community college structure every day. Colleges that do not want to participate will not be forced to. Four year colleges have even numbers of board members and function without problems, so having six board members at community colleges should work just as well.

CON: This is a solution looking for a problem. There is no indication that this will improve the decision-making process. Students are currently heard at board meetings. Students have knowledge of the present, while board members make decisions based upon knowledge of the past, present, and future. Most critical votes are on personnel decisions and it is not appropriate for students to participate in those. The discretionary nature of the bill pits boards against students.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Bernal Baca, AFTWA; Jeff Johnson, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Brianne Wood, Bellevue College; Mike Bogatay, Marcus Sweetster, Washington Student Association; Laura Saunders, Special Assistant to the President, Bellevue College; Jacob Peltier, former student president, Bellevue College; Rose Brittain, 50+ Club, Bellevue College; Julie Rowe, student president, South Seattle Community College; Sarah Fisher, Sophia Trinh, Janina Klein, Johnny Wong, Simha Banks, Natalie Eberts, Chapman Chang, Bellevue College.

CON: Gene Crane, Olympic College.