

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5776

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 24, 2009

Title: An act relating to student fees, charges, and assessments.

Brief Description: Regarding student fees, charges, and assessments.

Sponsors: Senators McDermott, Schoesler, Fairley, Oemig, Jarrett and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/20/09, 2/24/09
[DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5776 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Jarrett, Vice Chair; Jacobsen, Kastama, McAuliffe and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Hewitt, Pflug and Stevens.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: In addition to tuition fees, students at institutions of higher education are charged services and activities fees. These fees are dedicated to fund student activities and programs as well as for repaying bonds and other indebtedness for facilities such as dormitories, hospitals, dining halls, parking facilities, and student, faculty, and employee housing. Students have a strong voice in recommending budgets for services and activities fees through the Services and Activities Fee Committee, and the governing boards of the institutions must adhere to the principle that the committee's desires be given priority consideration.

Generally, the use of public funds for lobbying is prohibited. This does not preclude an agency officer or employee from communicating with the Legislature for requests for legislative action or appropriations necessary for the business of the agency, or providing

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information or communicating on matters pertaining to the agency. Agencies that expend public funds for these restricted lobbying purposes are required to file quarterly statements with the Public Disclosure Commission that identifies the persons who lobbied, the general nature of the lobbying, and the proportionate amount of time and money spent on lobbying.

All six public baccalaureate institutions in the state of Washington are members of the Washington Student Lobby (WSL), plus memberships for the associations of graduate and professional students. In 2007 Bellevue Community College became the first two-year school to join. Other community colleges, technical colleges, and branch campuses often participate as non-voting members. Membership in the WSL is required for a student body to be able to vote and receive the legislative support services provided by the WSL.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Voluntary student fees for each academic year, may be created or increased by a majority vote of the student government or its equivalent or by a referendum presented to the student body. The use of those fees is not subject to the statute governing the use of public funds for lobbying.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute as Passed Committee): The boards of trustees or regents is not involved in the creation or increase of voluntary student fees.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Proposed Substitute as Heard in Committee: PRO: Some of the best voices we hear are those of students in the Washington Student Lobby. The issue is whether services and activities fees can be used for lobbying. The students have been an active voice in the Legislature for 25 years and just want to continue being so.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator McDermott, prime sponsor; Mike Bogatay, WSL; Larry Ganders, WSU.