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HOUSE BILL 1884

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State of Washington

61st Legislature

2009 Regular Session

**By** Representatives Ericksen, Roach, Takko, Johnson, Hinkle, Cox, Walsh, Dunshee, Sells, McCoy, Hope, Van De Wege, Goodman, and McCune

Read first time 02/02/09. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating a task force to review the process of  
2 Western Washington University's decision to terminate its one hundred  
3 five year old football program and to make recommendations about how to  
4 potentially reinstate the program prior to the 2009 season; creating  
5 new sections; providing an expiration date; and declaring an emergency.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the one  
8 hundred five year old Western Washington University football program  
9 has been an important part of the tradition and identity of Western  
10 Washington University.

11 (2) The legislature declares there are significant concerns being  
12 voiced by Western Washington University alumni and other affected  
13 stakeholders that the university administration's process to suddenly  
14 terminate the Western Washington University football program lacked  
15 reasonable notice, transparency, and a public process.

16 (3) The legislature finds that athletic programs at colleges and  
17 universities help to foster diversity and inclusion and help to create  
18 and support an inclusive culture of equitable participation for  
19 student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and

1 administrators from diverse backgrounds. As such, the legislature is  
2 concerned that the termination of the Western Washington University  
3 football program could adversely impact student and employment  
4 diversity at Western Washington University.

5 (4) In addition, the legislature is concerned that the termination  
6 of the Western Washington University football program may cause  
7 secondary negative consequences to other rival football programs in its  
8 football league as there will be a smaller critical mass of schools  
9 that will be able to compete against each other.

10 (5) Furthermore, the elimination of the football program will  
11 result in a reduction of opportunities in athletics for women, as the  
12 school will have to either eliminate women's teams or reduce roster  
13 sizes to become compliant with Title IX of the education amendments of  
14 1972 to the 1964 civil rights act (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1681 et seq.).

15 (6) The legislature is also concerned about the economic impact to  
16 the region surrounding Western Washington University. The city of  
17 Bellingham completed a ten million dollar remodel to Civic stadium,  
18 with the Western Washington University football team intended as its  
19 primary tenant. Also of concern is the lease agreement with the city,  
20 totaling eight hundred thousand dollars over twenty years, which is now  
21 in jeopardy. Further, local merchants, the city, and the surrounding  
22 region stand to lose significant tourism dollars in the form of lost  
23 hotel, restaurant, and other revenue associated with the program.

24 (7) The legislature is concerned about the economic impact to  
25 member institutions of the greater northwest athletic conference,  
26 specifically Central Washington University, which will be negatively  
27 impacted by the loss of the rivalry, lost income from the "battle in  
28 Seattle," and additional costs incurred from scheduling new opponents  
29 who may require additional travel or guarantees.

30 (8) The legislature is concerned about recent reports of donors  
31 canceling contributions and endowment pledges for education programs at  
32 Western Washington University due to the negative publicity following  
33 the announced cancellation of the program.

34 (9) The legislature has also recently learned that some of the  
35 funding and related issues that led to the Western Washington  
36 University administration's sudden decision to terminate the football  
37 program may now have been resolved by fund-raising efforts of Western  
38 Washington University alumni and other affected stakeholders. Given

1 the strong and immediate financial support being pledged to reinstate  
2 the Western Washington University football program, the legislature  
3 finds that more discussion and deliberation is needed regarding the  
4 future of the program.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) A legislative task force to review  
6 reinstatement of the Western Washington University football program is  
7 established, with members as provided in subsection (2) of this  
8 section.

9 (2)(a) The president of the senate shall appoint two members: One  
10 member from the forty-second legislative district, and one member from  
11 either the thirty-ninth legislative district, the tenth legislative  
12 district, or the fortieth legislative district.

13 (b) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint four  
14 members: Two members from the forty-second legislative district, and  
15 then two members from either the thirty-ninth legislative district, the  
16 tenth legislative district, or the fortieth legislative district.

17 (c) Also, a representative from each of the following organizations  
18 must be appointed to the task force: Western Washington University  
19 alumni association, Bellingham-Whatcom chamber of commerce,  
20 Bellingham/Whatcom county convention and visitors bureau, Western  
21 Washington University administration, "save WWU football," the  
22 Seattle/Puget Sound national association for the advancement of colored  
23 people, and the Western Washington University football team.

24 (d) The task force shall choose its chair from among its membership  
25 at its first meeting.

26 (3)(a) The task force must review whether current fund-raising  
27 efforts by Western Washington University alumni and affected  
28 stakeholders are sufficient to reinstate and sustain the Western  
29 Washington University football program.

30 (b) The task force must also review the impact of both terminating  
31 and reinstating the Western Washington University football program on  
32 diversity and inclusion at Western Washington University.

33 (4) Staff support for the task force must be provided by the senate  
34 committee services and the house of representatives office of program  
35 research.

36 (5)(a) Legislative members of the task force must be reimbursed for  
37 travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120.

1 (b) The expenses of the task force must be paid jointly by the  
2 senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are  
3 subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee  
4 and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their  
5 successor committees.

6 (6) The task force shall immediately commence work on this issue  
7 and hold meetings until June 30, 2009, and report its findings and  
8 recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature by  
9 July 1, 2009.

10 (7) This section expires December 31, 2009.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act is necessary for the immediate  
12 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the  
13 state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect  
14 immediately.

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