

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2291

As Reported By House Committee On:
Trade & Economic Development

Title: An act relating to international educational, cultural, and business exchanges.

Brief Description: Promoting international educational, cultural, and business exchanges.

Sponsors: Representatives Van Luven, Veloria, Brumsickle, Jacobsen, Radcliff, Hatfield, Mason and Thompson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Trade & Economic Development: 1/18/96, 1/22/96 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Van Luven, Chairman; Radcliff, Vice Chairman; D. Schmidt, Vice Chairman; Sheldon, Ranking Minority Member; Veloria, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Hatfield; Hickel; Mason; Sherstad; Skinner and Valle.

Staff: Kenny Pittman (786-7392).

Background: In 1993, the Legislature established a special Task Force on International Education and Cultural Exchanges. The task force was created in recognition of the importance of world trade to the state's economy and the role of international education and trade in furthering the national goals of peaceful and friendly relations with other countries.

The task force issued its report to the Legislature in November 1994. The report emphasized the need to combine the forces of business and academia to forge international education and cultural exchange programs that foster the economic health of Washington State.

Washington State has benefitted from previous educational, cultural, and business exchanges with other countries. These exchanges have become important aspects of the state's trade development and have contributed to the international education of its citizens.

Summary of Bill:

Cultural Exchange Council

The International Education and Exchange Council is created as a public-private partnership in the Office of the Secretary of State. The council works to develop Washington's efforts by means of targeted training and by working with educational and trade organizations from outside the United States.

The council consists of representatives of the Legislature, the Governor's Office of International Relations and Protocol, state agencies, common schools and institutions of higher education, businesses involved in international trade, and organizations involved in international trade and cultural exchanges. The council's duties include (1) advising the Governor and elected officials on the need for international education and cultural exchanges; (2) assisting others to work with countries that comprise the state's targeted trading partners; (3) promoting efforts to enhance educational and cultural exchange opportunities; (4) assisting local governments in maintaining their established sister relationships in other countries; (5) maintaining a data base on cultural exchange opportunities and individuals who have participated in international exchanges; and (6) monitoring the recommendations of the Washington Task Force on International Education and Cultural Exchanges.

The council may establish a private, nonprofit corporation to foster international education and cultural exchange efforts with other countries. The Secretary of State may accept gifts, grants, conveyances, bequests, or real or personal property to further the objectives of the council. The Secretary of State may adopt rules to govern and protect the receipt and expenditure of proceeds.

International Trading Partners Program

The International Trading Partners program is created as a pilot project in the Office of the Secretary of State. The project is designed to train Washington residents who volunteer as international trading partners. The Secretary of State will provide necessary technical assistance and training to volunteers who participate in the project. Volunteers are not employees of the state and are selected because of their skills, expertise, and language proficiency in relation to the needs of the participating country. The terms of volunteer participation as an international trade partner are subject to policies established by the Secretary of State.

The activities of volunteers who participate as international trading partners may be funded through legislative appropriations, federal funds, private support funds, and other appropriate funding sources. Subject to funding, volunteers may be provided money to cover the costs of living in the country of service.

International Contact Data Base

The International Contact Data Base is established and maintained by the Secretary of State. The data base contains a listing of (1) Washington residents working or studying overseas; (2) international students who have studied in Washington; (3) exchange opportunities for Washington residents wanting to participate in education, internships, or technical assistance programs in foreign countries; (4) international business contacts of people wanting to do business with Washington businesses; and (5) international government contacts. Information in the data base is available to the public on request for free or at cost. Any person listed in the data base may request removal from the data base.

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, in consultation with the Office of International Relations and Protocol, Office of the Secretary of State, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Employment Security, Department shall identify up to 15 countries that are of strategic importance to the development of Washington's international trade relations.

International Student Exchanges and Internships

The Washington International Exchange Scholarship program is created and administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HEC). The program is designed to provide scholarships, up to one academic year, to students from countries that have trading relationships with Washington State.

The HEC Board must (1) convene an advisory committee, (2) select exchange students to receive scholarships, (3) adopt rules and guidelines to carry out the program, (4) solicit and accept grants and donations from all sources, (5) establish service obligations of exchange students, (6) establish criteria for selecting countries to participate in the program, and (7) negotiate and enter into agreements with countries to allow Washington students to attend international institutions under similar terms and conditions.

The Washington International Exchange Trust Fund is established in the custody of the State Treasurer. The Legislature may appropriate funds to the trust fund to be used only to match private cash contributions.

The Washington International Exchange Scholarship Endowment Fund is established in the custody of the State Treasurer. Private contributions, other funds, and state matching funds from the trust fund are deposited into the endowment fund. Only the earnings from the endowment can be used to provide scholarships to international students. The number of scholarships awarded to international students is limited by the amount of interest received from the endowment fund.

The HEC Board must establish an advisory board to assist in the program design and selection criteria for the International Student Internship program. The internship program is designed to give Washington State students the opportunity to study and earn degree credit in a country identified as a targeted trading partner. Recommendations to the Legislature recommendations for program design and selection criteria must be made by December 31, 1997. The advisory committee expires December 1, 1997.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 1996.

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

Testimony For: The state's future is in international trade. This builds on the state's foundation and upon its most important resource, the people of Washington. The contacts made through cultural and business exchanges last a lifetime. The results of these relationships are long-term.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Pro) Representative Van Luven, prime sponsor; Ralph Munro, Secretary of State; Burton Bard, American Cultural Exchange; and William Asbury.