

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 6705

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to telecommunications, telecommunications planning, and higher education technology.

Brief Description: Requiring a higher education technology plan.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Bauer, Wood, Kohl, Zarelli, Sutherland, Cantu, Prince, Sheldon, Loveland, Winsley, Hale and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/20/96, 2/23/96 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Mulliken, Vice Chairman; Mason, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Blanton; Delvin; Goldsmith; Mastin; Scheuerman and Sheahan.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7120).

Background: The public baccalaureate institutions and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) have proposed the development of a higher education network. This network would link all campuses of the public four-year institutions, community and technical colleges, branch campuses, some county extension sites, and some off-campus locations. The cost of the proposal totals \$40 million General Fund-State.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Higher Education Network and Distance Education Committee is formed. The committee shall be convened by the Department of Information Services (DIS) and shall include the following or designees: the director of DIS, the executive director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), a president of a community or technical college, a president of a public baccalaureate institution, the state librarian, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. On a nonvoting basis, the committee also

includes a representative of the computer or telecommunications industry and a representative of a private college.

This committee shall develop a network design and implementation plan for approval or modification by the Information Services Board (ISB). The design shall incorporate the following principles: (a) maximize existing networks and video telecommunications resources owned or operated by the state; (b) minimize duplication of technology resources and education programs or degrees at institutions; (c) provide optimum geographic and social distribution of the benefits of a network; (d) ensure that the network can be expanded and upgraded, is based on an open-architecture model, and connects to national and worldwide information infrastructures; (e) foster partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit entities; and (f) provide for future access by public entities on a no-cost or low-cost basis. Such entities shall include, but are not limited to public libraries, public hospitals, public schools, and public service agencies. The design shall detail which sites shall be connected to the network and the technologies and service delivery modes to be utilized at each site.

For each site included in the network design the HECB shall approve a service delivery plan which provides for effective utilization of planned investments. The HECB shall also approve a network governance structure, ensuring participation by all members of the network. The statutory authority of the board to coordinate telecommunication programming for public baccalaureate institutions is expanded. The board will coordinate programming, location selection, meeting community needs, and developing a statewide telecommunication plan for higher education.

The implementation plan shall prioritize investments into phases to be funded by the Legislature. The plan shall also incorporate specific funding options that are appropriate for the 1997 supplemental budget. The committee shall ensure that in each phase (a) the addition of a site or sites to the network will result in a completed link and the capability to operate distance education programs; (b) the sites added in each phase have an HECB-approved service delivery plan; and (c) each phase has completed a request for proposals process.

Once approved by the ISB, the design and implementation plan shall be submitted to the Office of Financial Management and the relevant committees of the Legislature by October 1, 1996.

A fund is created with the State Treasurer. Gifts, legislative appropriations, and grants for use in developing the higher education distance education network may be deposited in the account. Moneys from the account may be disbursed at the request of the director of the Department of Information Services for implementation of the network plan.

The membership of the Information Services Board is expanded to include the Superintendent of Public Instruction, a second representative of the private sector, one representative of the House of Representatives, and one representative of the Senate. The two legislative appointees may not be from the same political party. One member, who is currently appointed jointly by the House of Representatives and the Senate is removed.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The Department of Information Services will convene a committee to design the higher education telecommunication network. The principles the committee will adhere to as it designs the network are described. The Higher Education Coordinating Board will adopt a site plan that considers community needs, programming, and other issues at each proposed site. Funding for the network must await a completed plan. References to networks and telecommunication equipment for the common schools are removed. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is added to the ISB board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: As Washington moves toward a seamless education system, coordinating a telecommunications network that includes K-12 and higher education would maximize the investment of the state by minimizing the duplication of expensive telecommunication infrastructures among local school districts and public colleges and universities. Investments of the magnitude necessary to create a widely dispersed telecommunication network require thoughtful planning. States such as Iowa and Georgia lost millions by creating networks that were overbuilt and underutilized. Without prior planning, Washington could buy system components that will become obsolete very shortly.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Judith Billings, State Superintendent of Public Instruction (pro); Jean Ameluxen, Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (pro); Len McComb, Director, Department of Revenue and Chair, Information Services Board (pro); Ron Maim, Executive Director, Washington State Telecommunication Association and panel of representatives from private industry (testified); Terry Teale, Council of Presidents (pro); Michael Scroggins, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (pro); Susan Patrick, Higher Education Coordinating Board (pro); and Norm Wisner, Educational Service District (pro).