

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6235

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, January 31, 1996

Title: An act relating to ethics, technology, and federal standards for conflicts in public service.

Brief Description: Adopting ethics standards for academic or scientific public service work.

Sponsors: Senators Drew, McDonald, Haugen, Rinehart, Snyder, Kohl, Winsley, Sheldon, Bauer, Wood and Finkbeiner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 1/23/96, 1/31/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6235 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Goings, Hale, Heavey, McCaslin and Winsley.

Staff: Rod McAulay (786-7754)

Background: In 1994, following the recommendations of a special Governor's Commission on Ethics, the Legislature adopted a comprehensive revision of the laws establishing ethical standards and procedures for state officers and employees. These standards apply to all state employees including university faculty.

There is concern that a strict reading of the statutes will preclude university faculty engaged in significant scientific and technological research from collaborating with private enterprise and nonprofit organizations in facilitating the development and marketing of new technologies within the state. The standards may also inhibit the inflow of grants to state universities for research and development activities. It is proposed that the ethics provisions be modified to permit certain relationships to exist between university faculty and outside entities subject to existing national standards regarding conflicts of interest and financial disclosure.

Definitions in the ethics statutes do not include a definition of "grant" or of "official duty." The definition of "gift" includes a list of things which are not gifts. This list does not include awards, prizes, scholarships, or other items provided in recognition of academic or scientific achievement.

Under current ethics law, no state officer or employee may: