

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6705

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 1, 1996
Ways & Means, February 6, 1996

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

Brief Description: Requiring a higher education technology plan.

Sponsors: Senators Bauer, Wood, Kohl, Zarelli, Sutherland, Cantu, Prince, Sheldon, Loveland, Winsley, Hale and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/29/96, 2/1/96 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/5/96, 2/6/96 [DP2S].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6705 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chair; Kohl, Vice Chair; Drew, Hale, McAuliffe, Prince, Rasmussen, Sheldon and Wood.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 6705 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Bauer, Drew, Finkbeiner, Fraser, Hargrove, Kohl, Long, Pelz, Quigley, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Sutherland and Winsley.

Staff: Mike Groesch (786-7434)

Background: The state of Washington affirmed its efforts toward statewide technology planning in 1987 by requiring the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Higher Education Coordinating Board to jointly develop and recommend an educational telecommunications network plan to provide coordination between the common schools and higher education institutions. In the same year, the Department of Community Development and the Department of Information Services were charged with the responsibility of conducting a study for a video telecommunications plan for state government.

As one of its duties, the Information Services Board is "to assure the cost-effective development and incremental implementation of a state-wide video telecommunications system to serve: Public schools; educational service districts; vocational technical institutes; community colleges; colleges and universities..." In addition, the 1995-97 budget states that "Prior to any such expenditure by a public institution of postsecondary education, a telecommunications expenditure plan shall be approved by the higher education coordinating board. The higher education coordinating board shall coordinate the use of video telecommunications for instruction and instructional support in postsecondary education, including the review and approval of instructional telecommunications course offerings."

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: The Legislature recognizes that providing the state of Washington with the educated citizenry required for the maintenance of a well-prepared work force, and the quality of life desired by that citizenry, requires the expansion and interconnection of the state's higher education technology.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board's (HECB) authority in higher education telecommunications programming is clarified. The board is instructed to develop and approve a statewide higher education telecommunications plan. The plan must be reported to the Legislature by December 15, 1996. For the 1995-97 biennium, no expenditures may be made for a major video telecommunication project by a public institution of higher education until the HECB approves a process for developing a programming and location plan. The board is also directed to approve a governance structure for the Washington Higher Education Network.

The interactions between the K-12 system and the Department of Information Services (DIS) are defined. The office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is the point of contact in technology planning, standards development and project approval through the Department of Information Services. The Department of Information Services is provided with expenditure approval over major video telecommunications projects.

Second Substitute Compared to Substitute Bill: The appropriations and budgetary language relating to the Washington Higher Education Network are deleted. OSPI is the lead agency for K-12 technology plans that must be reviewed by DIS. Clarification is added that nonstate funds will not be subject to DIS expenditure control and that existing educational telecommunication programs will not be interrupted or reevaluated because of new authorities established by the bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 1996.

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

Testimony For (Higher Education): The HECB can lead in the development of a state higher education telecommunications plan. Telecommunications is a part of the answer to the access challenge. The HECB takes its coordinating role seriously; the board has traditionally served as the state's program planning body. In addition, the HECB takes the long view when setting goals such as the enrollment goal. Technology requires this long view as well. The primary purpose of the HECB is to represent the broad public interest.

The HECB can help the Legislature by recommending the appropriate staging of program offerings based on assessment of state priorities. The HECB experience with performance measures would be incorporated into the planning to evaluate whether or not the technology investment is serving the state as intended. Washington should not delay in planning for the implementation of the Washington Higher Education Network. The community colleges are eager to participate in the project.

Testimony Against (Higher Education): No delay for the WHEN project. The ISB has oversight of technology plans so there is no need for further bureaucracy. Any delay could increase costs. WHEN is not new technology so delay is unnecessary. Current programs should not be harmed by advancing the new network.

Testified (Higher Education): PRO: Marc Gaspard, Exec. Dir., HECB; Bruce Shaull, Sprint/United Tel; Dale Vincent, U.S. West Communications; Mike Scroggins, SBCTC; CON: Terry Teale, Exec. Dir., COP; Larry Ganders, WSU.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): Appropriations for the WHEN project should be provided directly to the higher education institutions. The HECB approval process should take less than 60 days to accomplish. The existing processes outlined in the bill will provide accountability and assurances that the decision process will provide the desired outcomes. These processes and regulatory aspects of the bill should not drive additional costs. There will be no need for approval of ongoing maintenance costs.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): There is no need to create additional bureaucracy to evaluate K-12 technology acquisitions. It will be helpful to clarify that expenditure control only apply to state appropriations. ESDs and other K-12 program providers already are required to receive approval through the OSPI.

Testified (Ways & Means): Terry Teale, Executive Director, Council of Presidents (pro); Susan Patrick, HECB (pro); Dennis Small, OSPI (con); Len McComb, Chair, Information Services Board (pro); Steve Kolodny, Director, Department of Information Services (pro); Norm Weisner, Assn. of Educational Service Districts (con); Brian Talbot, ESD 101 (con).