

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Representative Don Carlson, Chair

BILL ANALYSIS
HB 2373

BACKGROUND: With some exceptions, students who move to Washington in order to attend a public college or university are charged a much higher tuition rate than the one levied on Washington residents.

The definitions for resident and nonresident students are determined by law. Resident students who are dependents must be able to prove that their parents or guardians have been domiciled in the state for at least one year before the students enrolled in college. Independent students must meet the same test themselves. Some students who cannot meet this test are defined as Washington residents by law. Students who fall into this category include the spouses and dependents of active duty military personnel stationed in the state and some American Indian students from Idaho, Oregon, and Montana.

In addition, through a variety of tuition waiver programs, some nonresident students are permitted to pay resident tuition rates. These waiver programs are described in law. The programs are permissive, meaning that colleges and universities may choose whether to grant the tuition waivers to eligible students. Tuition reciprocity programs are an example of waiver programs that permit some nonresident students to pay resident tuition rates. The Higher Education Coordinating Board is responsible for entering reciprocity agreements on the state's behalf. The board has entered agreements with Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia. Under the agreements, a stipulated number of resident students from those states and province are permitted to pay resident tuition rates at stipulated colleges in Washington. In return, a stipulated number of Washington residents are given the same privilege in colleges in Oregon, Idaho and British Columbia.

Under the 1996-97 reciprocity agreement with Oregon, 313 students from Washington pay resident tuition rates at Portland State University and the Oregon Institute of Technology. An additional 274 Washingtonians pay resident rates at eight community colleges in Oregon. Sixty Oregon students pay resident rates at Washington State University, Western Washington University, and The Evergreen State College. Another 577 Oregonians pay resident rates at six community colleges in Washington.

SUMMARY: The Border County Higher Education Opportunity Pilot Project is created. Through the pilot project, resident students from Spokane County, Washington, and Kootenai and Bonner County, Idaho will be able to pay resident tuition at public colleges and universities in either county. Idaho students may take programs offered in Spokane County by any Washington public college or university.

In order to pay resident tuition rates, Idaho students must meet their sending state's residency laws and must have been domiciled in Kootenai or Bonner County for at least 90 days immediately before enrolling in a college or university in Spokane County. Washington students participating in the pilot may pay resident tuition rates at public colleges and universities in Kootenai or Bonner County if the students or their parents or guardians have been domiciled in Spokane County for at least 90 days immediately before enrollment.

Through the pilot project, eligible Washington students may use their state funded financial aid packages while studying in eligible public and independent colleges and universities and private career schools and colleges in Kootenai and Bonner Counties. Idaho students, and Washington residents who have not been domiciled in the state for at least one year, will not be eligible to participate in Washington's aid programs.

Washington's participation in the pilot project will be administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The board will determine eligibility criteria for institutional and student participation in the pilot. By November 30, 2001, the board will report to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature on the results of the pilot.

Washington's participation in the pilot project will become operable at the beginning of the academic term following enactment of legislation in Idaho that permits residents of Spokane County to pay resident tuition rates in public colleges and universities in Kootenai and Bonner counties.

The act expires on June 30, 2002.