

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5517

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to the membership of the governing boards of the state's institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Requiring one student member on each state institution of higher education's governing board.

Sponsors: Senators Wood, Kohl, Bauer, Patterson, Winsley, Brown, Goings, Fraser, Loveland, Benton, Sellar, Franklin and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/25/97, 3/28/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Radcliff, Vice Chairman; Mason, Ranking Minority Member; Kenney, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Butler; Dunn; O'Brien and Sheahan.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Van Luven.

Staff: Marilee Scarbrough (786-7196).

Background: The public research institutions, the University of Washington (UW) and Washington State University (WSU), are each governed by a board of regents. Each board has nine members appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, to serve six-year terms.

The Evergreen State College (TESC) and the regional universities, Central Washington University (CWU), Eastern Washington University (EWU), and Western Washington University (WWU), are each governed by a seven-member board of trustees appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, to serve a term of six years.

The research universities allow one graduate student, one undergraduate student, and one representative of the faculty senate to serve as advisory members to the boards. The advisory members are presidents of their respective associations. Advisory members do not vote, but do have a formal place on the agenda at each meeting.

The regional universities have the chair of the faculty senate and the student body president sit as advisory members to the board. CWU includes the chair of the association of administrators. EWU's board receives from the advisory members a written and an oral report at each meeting. Advisory members do not vote.

Sitting at the table with the board of trustees at TESC are the past chair of the faculty agenda committee, one student volunteer, one alumni representative, and one staff representative elected by the staff. These advisory members do not vote but take part in the discussion.

Summary of Bill: For the University of Washington and for Washington State University, the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, appoints one full-time student in good standing to the board of regents. The term of the student regent is for one year from October 1 until the appointment and qualification of the successor. Each board of regents is 10 members, with six members constituting a quorum.

For CWU, WWU, EWU, and TESC the Governor, with the consent of the Senate, appoints one full-time student in good standing to the board of trustees. The term of the student trustee is for one year from October 1 until the appointment and qualification of the successor. Each board of trustees is eight members, with five members constituting a quorum.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Thirty-four states have students serving on governing boards. The current system allows a student to participate in discussion, but students do not have a vote or participate in executive sessions. Boards need the student perspective. There is no inherent conflict of interest from allowing students to serve on governing boards. Students are the most important people on the campus. Students are unanimously in support of this legislation. Allowing students on governing boards will empower students and create future leaders.

Testimony Against: Students are amply represented by the current system. A trustee position, by its nature, should represent an outside perspective. It is a violation of the trust relationship to have the beneficiary acting as trustee. Allowing

students to serve is a conflict of interest, it violates the trust relationship, and it creates internal/external governance issues. Boards review sensitive issues regarding property acquisition, hiring and firing professors, and hiring and firing the president. One-year terms are too short to learn the process and skills needed to participate as an effective board member. We do not question the ability of students to serve on the board. However, we oppose creation of an interest-based board. All trustees should be selected based on their ability to provide leadership to a higher education institution, not the fact that they are students.

Testified: (Pro) Senator Jeanette Wood, prime sponsor; Tres Gallant, Washington Student Lobby; Amit Ranade, Washington Student Lobby; and Keith Boyd, Washington Student Lobby. (Con) Kim Merriman, The Evergreen State College; Judy McNickle, Western Washington University; and Larry Ganders, Washington State University.