

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6717

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 5, 1998

Title: An act relating to institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Providing for the transfer of the Spokane Riverpoint campus to Washington State University and eliminating the joint center for higher education.

Sponsors: Senators West, Prince and Hale.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/2/98, 2/5/98 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6717 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wood, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Bauer, Hale, Kohl, Patterson, Prince, B. Sheldon and West.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: Over time, a number of studies have been conducted that looked at the higher education needs of the city of Spokane. The Report of the Study Committee on Coordination in Higher Education delivered to the 1985 Legislature "found a pattern of expansionism and competition among institutions in the Spokane area." The report therefore recommended the creation of "a joint center responsible for all off-campus programs offered by WSU and EWU in Spokane." Rather than merging the governing boards as the report recommended, the 1985 Legislature created the Joint Center for Higher Education (JCHE), an entity that has become the fiscal agent for the Riverpoint Higher Education Park.

In the same legislation that created JCHE, the 1985 Legislature also created the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) as the agency "to provide planning, coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis ... represent[ing] the broad public interest above the interests of the individual colleges and universities." HECB has not only provided and updated a Master Plan for higher education in Washington, it has also recommended through that planning process, the creation of branch campuses of the public research institutions "to expand upper-division and graduate educational opportunities in the state's large urban centers."

The 1989 Legislature created a number of branch campuses including the Spokane branch campus of Washington State University. The Spokane branch campus legislation allows for collocation of EWU in Spokane. Programs offered by all branch campuses are required to go before HECB for approval. However, any program offered in Spokane also must seek the approval of JCHE.

Recently, EWU has suffered a decline in enrollment and has been required to go through an unusual process at HECB level for release of funds. The President and the Provost have resigned. At the request of the Governor, HECB has undertaken a comprehensive review of higher education opportunities in Spokane and will provide draft recommendations early in February 1998.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Washington State University, through the operation of its Spokane branch campus, is responsible for providing upper-division and graduate higher education programs in Spokane. Eastern Washington University is no longer collocated in Cheney and Spokane. However, programs currently offered in Spokane by EWU will undergo evaluation by the HECB and the board determines whether or not to continue approval for such programs.

The Joint Center for Higher Education is eliminated. The authority to approve program offerings rests with the HECB as it does in all areas of the state of Washington.

All of the assets at the Riverpoint Higher Education Park, with the exception of the real property designated as belonging to the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute, are transferred to Washington State University. Parking fees at Riverpoint are the responsibility of the regents of WSU.

The president of a public four-year institution is provided housing or a housing allowance only when residing in the location where the institution is designated in statute.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill clarifies that the land at Riverpoint Higher Education Park not transferred to WSU is reserved for SIRTII.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 1998.

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

Testimony For: The branch campuses have been successful operations across the state. WSU has been recognized as an innovative institution. The JCHE has completed its original mission: "to manage turf wars." The change from a joint center to a branch campus has already occurred in the Tri-Cities and in Vancouver. Enrollments in the Spokane area have been hurt by over enrollments in western Washington « but we do continue to grow as a system.

Passing this bill will help to provide educational opportunities to the citizens of Spokane. A comparison is made between Spokane and Tacoma.

Students of EWU will not be disadvantaged and future students will be served based on HECB guidelines. Cooperative programs among institutions ought to continue. Riverpoint is meant to continue as an education park.

The cloud over EWU must disappear in order to define the mission or recruit a new president. Legislative deadlines are a factor in the timing of the proposal.

Testimony Against: We are concerned about the haste of the bill and wonder why you are eliminating the JCHE. An intent section is a vital, missing piece. Please include a purpose and intent that will survive judicial scrutiny. We need clarification of intent. Graduate students and others are concerned about unintended consequences.

Please keep EWU programs located at Riverpoint Park. EWU students are proud of the individual attention they get from their professors. They know that EWU does know that it is meant to serve students.

EWU has offered programs in Spokane for 60 years where it has played a leadership role, especially in the health sciences area and the high-tech business community. Do not relegate EWU to Cheney only. Travel time to Cheney is inconvenient to the business community. Ninety percent of the MBA students live in Spokane and should not have to drive to Cheney.

What is it that you are trying to accomplish? Is there a shared vision? Does the bill destabilize the fund raising capabilities of EWU?

Testified: PRO: President Sam Smith, WSU; Todd Mielke, Spokane Area Chambers of Commerce; CON: Michael Ormsby, EWU Trustee; Father Frank Costello, V.P. Gonzaga University; Mike Stewart, V.P. for Business, EWU; Lashund Lambert, President ASEWU; Frank Klarich, ASEWU Council; Kurt Orton, Richards Merrill & Peterson; Roger Ingebretsen, ITRON; Julie Prafke, President Humanix; Susan Bradbury, American Planning Association; Esther Larsen, EWU graduate student; Michael Davoleo, EWU graduate; Tom Parker, Washington Friends of Higher Education (with concerns).