

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5552

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to border county higher education opportunities.

Brief Description: Expanding border county higher education opportunities.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Carlson, Kohl-Welles, Hale, B. Sheldon, Hewitt, Sheahan, Shin, Zarelli, Parlette and Horn).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/19/01, 3/21/01 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The Border County Higher Education Project is made permanent and is expanded to include bordering Oregon counties and Washington institutions of higher education to participate in the program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Cox, Republican Co-Chair; Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair; Gombosky, Democratic Vice Chair; Jarrett, Republican Vice Chair; Dunn, Fromhold, Lantz and Skinner.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

Reciprocity agreements between Oregon and Washington have been in effect for nearly two decades. The agreements specify numbers of students participating and dollar amounts waived by each state. Since the early 1990s, several colleges and universities in both states elected to discontinue participation due primarily to administration complexities.

In 1997 Oregon state statute allowed Washington residents to enroll in courses at any of

its community colleges at resident tuition rates. Washington residents also could enroll at Portland State University and Oregon Institute of Technology for eight credits or less at resident tuition rates.

In 1999 the Border County Higher Education Pilot Project was created responding to tuition policy changes made by the state of Oregon. Under the pilot project, residents of Oregon who have resided in Columbia, Multnomah, Clatsop or Washington counties for at least 90 days are eligible to pay resident tuition rates for any number of credits if they enroll in courses at Lower Columbia Community College, Grays Harbor Community College, and Clark Community College, or for eight or fewer credits at the Vancouver branch of Washington State University. In 2000 the pilot project was expanded to include residents of Clackamas County, Oregon.

In December of 2000 Portland State University announced that they will no longer offer in-state tuition to Washington residents due to financial reasons. Instead, they will offer competitive scholarships.

The program is administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). Participating Washington institutions are required to give priority program enrollment to Washington residents. The HECB is required to analyze by program the impact of the pilot project on enrollment levels, distribution of students by residency, and enrollment capacity, and report to the Governor and Legislature on the results by November 30, 2001. The pilot project expires June 30, 2002.

Summary of Bill:

The project is made permanent and expanded to allow Washington institutions of higher education located in counties on the Oregon border to implement tuition policies that correspond to Oregon policies. Columbia Basin Community College, Walla Walla Community College, and the Tri-Cities branch of Washington State University are added to the list of participating Washington institutions of higher education.

Residents of the Oregon counties of Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, and Wasco are added for eligibility to enroll at the Washington community colleges participating in the program, and residents of the counties of Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa are added for eligibility to enroll at the Tri-Cities and Vancouver branches of Washington State University.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill recognizes the border between Washington and Oregon in terms of reciprocity. About 2,000 students attend school in Oregon and 500 Oregon students attend school in Washington. There is a need to balance this and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has given us warning. It is hoped that this bill will help.

The Washington Student Lobby supports this bill and the addition of the WSU Tri-Cities branch. Several students will take advantage of this due to access and economic reasons. The regional economy of the Vancouver area will be enhanced by this bill. WSU-Vancouver stands to gain more students than they would lose. It offers many students an opportunity to attend college that otherwise would not, and also offers students a chance to take a class in Oregon that perhaps isn't offered at any of the institutions in Washington.

The numbers of students that currently attend WSU-Vancouver is not significant and do not have a financial impact. Adding the Tri-Cities branch could help with plans to offer a nursing program by increasing numbers in the program with Oregon students. Although the numbers that participate in this program aren't significant, it allows schools to offer a diversity of programs.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Carlson, prime sponsor; Kevin Carns, aide to Senator Carlson; Steve Wymer, Associated Students of Washington State University; and Jane Dennie, Washington State University.