

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5971

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, March 2, 2005

Title: An act relating to a statewide student association.

Brief Description: Authorizing a statewide student association.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Pridemore, Schmidt, Eide, Shin, Rockefeller, Berkey, Weinstein, Kohl-Welles, Delvin and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/23/05, 3/2/05 [DPS, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5971 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Carrell.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Mulliken and Pflug.

Staff: Brian Jeffries (786-7422)

Background: Students attending state public research and comprehensive universities are organized through the Washington Student Lobby to carry out educational, issue advocacy, and awareness activities in the interest of students. Currently, the Washington Student Lobby relies on voluntary, direct student contributions and funds from student government funds from the member universities to support lobbying efforts.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must recognize one non-profit statewide student association for the state's public baccalaureate institutions, with each recognized campus student government association affiliated with the statewide student association, that will carry out educational, issue advocacy, and awareness activities in the interest of members of the statewide student association. This recognition must include the annual review and approval of the bylaws of the association. All students enrolled in baccalaureate institutions with recognized student government associations are required to be members unless the students opt out.

A statewide student association fee may be assessed upon all students of the state's four-year institutions, subject to the approval of the HECB. Students who voluntarily choose not to be members of the statewide student association may not be assessed the fee. The fee may not exceed one-quarter of one percent of resident undergraduate tuition. The fee must be collected by the four-year institutions and transferred at least semiannually to the statewide student association. A percentage of fees collected may be retained by the institutions to cover administrative costs, not to exceed five percent.

The statewide student association must operate at the direction of a board of directors. Officers of the board must represent the diversity of the four-year institutions, including underrepresented groups and must be elected from the membership of the association. The process for the election of the association board of directors and duties must be defined in the bylaws of the association. The association must submit an annual report to the HECB and to relevant committees of the legislature by Dec. 31 of each year.

The statewide student association must not be prevented from lobbying government institutions in the interest of its members, including but not limited to: the Legislature; the Governor and the Governor's staff; and other executive branch agencies, boards, and commissions. The fee collected for the operation of the association may not be used in association with any local, state, or federal election or ballot proposition.

The HECB must adopt rules as necessary or appropriate to implement the recognition of the statewide student association.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The current student lobby is an important organization that provides a voice in Olympia. The viewpoint of students is a benefit to the debate and discussion of legislation that impacts higher education. Despite notable successes by the Washington Student Lobby throughout its history, the organization is not healthy financially and is not sustainable. An entirely new, reformed organization focused on this effort is the key to making it happen. Currently, the Washington Student Lobby is dependent on the good will of its member schools. Some contribute tens of thousands from direct student contributions, some only a few hundred

dollars from the student government funds, and there is no long-term predictability. The most successful organizations require a set fee per student. By assessing a per-student fee, we can assure stable and predictable funding while still allowing students who do not want to participate to opt out of membership and the small per-student fee. Students across the state need to be

organized to improve the effectiveness of the student voice in Olympia. Leaving grass-roots efforts to individual campuses alone creates inconsistency. The Washington Student Association will use its resources to bring campuses together through statewide efforts.

Testimony Against: The HECB should not have the authority to set fees for the operation of the statewide student association. The institutions themselves retain at local level the authority to set fees imposed on students.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Jamie Corning, ASUW; Nicholas Cizek, ASWWU; Randy Hodgins, UW; Bruce Botka, HECB; Jamie Coplan, TESC; Brady Horenstein, WSU.

CON: Judy McNickle, WWU.