

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SI 177

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As of January 22, 1996

**Title:** Relating to education.

**Sponsors:** People of the state of Washington.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Education: 1/22/96.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Staff:** Leslie Goldstein (786-7424)

**Background:** The basic charter school concept is to allow a group of teachers or others to apply for permission to open school and to give the same funds provided to public schools. The schools are generally freed from many state laws and regulations. Charter school legislation passed in Minnesota four years ago. Since then 18 other states have passed charter school legislation in various forms. Minnesota passed charter school legislation in 1991. California followed in 1992. In 1993, Massachusetts, Colorado, Wisconsin, New Mexico, and Georgia passed legislation. In 1994, Arizona, Michigan, Hawaii, and Kansas followed. Delaware, Texas, Louisiana, Wyoming, Rhode Island, Arkansas, and Alaska followed in 1995. In the states with charter school legislation, there are 219 charter schools in six states and 15 charter schools in the remaining 12 states.

**Summary of Bill: Overview.** The voters of each public school district may elect to convert the district to a "renewed public school district." Independent public schools may be created within that school district. The stated purpose is to "restore accountability, efficiency, and parental choice to public education."

**Creation of a Renewed Public School District.** A proposition to convert a public school district to a renewed public school district must be placed on the ballot at the earliest election date. If not approved, the measure must be placed on the ballot whenever a school district levy or bond measure is placed before the voters. An independent school district can only be converted back to a regular public school district if the conversion is approved by the voters. A measure to convert can only be placed on the ballot once every six years.

A renewed public school district contains two types of schools: a government-operated public school and an independent public school.

**Creation of an Independent Public School Within a Renewed Public School District.** In a renewed public school district, an independent public school can be created by: (1) a government-operated public school converting; or (2) a nonprofit organization obtaining a license.

Conversion of a government-operated public school: A government-operated public school can be converted by: (1) petition of two-thirds of the families with children attending the school; or (2) a petition signed by a majority of the parents and teachers employed by the school.

License to become an independent public school: The applicant must be a nonprofit corporation and must apply before August 1 of any year. The school board must approve or deny the license application within 14 days. An application can be denied only if the applicant does not satisfy one of the specific requirements for establishing an independent public school. The applicant must be given a chance to correct the problem. The applicant may appeal to the Superintendent of Public Instruction or an arbitrator.

**Requirements For Independent Public Schools.** Application of laws governing private schools: Independent public schools are not subject to any laws except those specifically stated and those laws governing approved private schools in effect as of December 31, 1994. These laws are generally those necessary to insure the health and safety of students and to insure a sufficient basic education to meet usual graduation requirements. These requirements include: