

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5138

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 26, 2003

Title: An act relating to the use of the Washington assessment of student learning for qualifying for the promise scholarship and other purposes.

Brief Description: Allowing the use of the Washington assessment of student learning for additional purposes.

Sponsors: Senator Carlson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/11/03, 2/26/03 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/10/03.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5138 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Johnson, Chair; Carlson, Eide, Finkbeiner, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Schmidt.

Staff: Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Karen Barrett (786-7711)

Background: A student is academically eligible for the Washington Promise Scholarship if the student: (1) graduates in the top 15 percent of his or her private or public high school graduating class, or (2) scores at least 1,200 on the Scholastic Assessment Test I on the first attempt or scores at least 27 on the American College Test on the first attempt. There are also financial eligibility criteria and restrictions on how promise scholarship funds can be used.

Students that are home schooled or attend a private school are not required to take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test. Private schools may voluntarily choose to administer the WASL or individual private or home school students may take the WASL by enrolling in public school for the days that the test is administered.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The methods to become eligible for the promise scholarship are expanded to include students exceeding the standard on the reading and math components and meeting the standard on the writing component of the high school WASL on his or her

first attempt at taking the WASL. The current eligibility criteria of being within the top 15 percent of the student's graduating class is changed to being within the top 10 percent.

Individuals who are 21 years of age or younger who receive a GED certificate are eligible for the Promise Scholarship if they meet the other eligibility requirements.

Students who attend a private high school or who are home schooled are permitted to take the WASL at an educational service district for the purpose of qualifying for a Promise Scholarship or any other purpose.

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

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary on substitute is available.

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

Testimony For: We are not eliminating any of the current eligibility criteria; we are only adding a new one. By adding the WASL as an eligibility criteria, we are creating an incentive for students to do well on the WASL. Creating an incentive such as this is very important because we need a way to ensure that students and parents take the WASL seriously. The WASL is also effective as a criteria for the scholarship because it has been shown to be as good of a predictor of college success as the other academic criteria that are currently used. While an incentive is very important, there is some concern over the funding availability for the scholarship. If the funding level remains constant and the WASL criteria is added, the amount of each Promise Scholarship will be reduced as the number of eligible students increase. If the amount is reduced too much more, it will not be much of an incentive. To reduce the fiscal impact, additional restrictions could be added, such as requiring that the student exceed the WASL standard score or require that the student pass the WASL on the first try. However, some have concerns that if we are too restrictive with requirements for the Promise Scholarship, then we are no longer meeting the purpose of the scholarship which was to encourage and assist those students who would not necessarily be considering college.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Carlson, prime sponsor; Bob Butts, OSPI; PRO (with concerns): Rainer Houser, AWSP; Ann Randall, WEA; Steve Mullin, WA Roundtable.