

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5254

As Passed Senate, March 8, 2005

Title: An act relating to a legislative youth advisory council.

Brief Description: Creating the legislative youth advisory council.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, Rasmussen, Franklin, McAuliffe and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/1/05 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/8/05, 41-7.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Fairley, Haugen, Kline, McCaslin, Mulliken, Pridemore and Roach.

Staff: Genevieve Pisarski (786-7488)

Background: Approximately three hundred children and adults have petitioned the legislature to provide a way for children to be directly involved with the legislature.

Summary of Bill: A legislative youth advisory council is established to examine issues of importance to youth, advise the legislature on these issues and any legislation that concerns them, and report annually with any recommendations for legislation.

The council has twenty-two members aged eighteen and under. Five each are appointed by the two major caucuses in the Senate and House of Representatives; two are appointed by the Governor.

The council will meet between three and six times a year, including up to two public hearings. Members will be reimbursed for expenses and will receive assistance from legislative staff.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Many kids are interested in government, but they don't have a voice, even though many issues affect them, such as education, health care, and transportation. Four hundred fifty out of five hundred young people and adults who heard a speech on this subject signed a petition asking to give kids a voice in government. Kids have good ideas that deserve to be considered. They would gain experience and learn leadership for the time when they

inherit today's problems. More of what affects the future should be in the hands of the future leaders. The states of Maine and Michigan already have programs like this, and there are numerous similar examples around the country. The City of Lacey uses youth advisors, as do Sen. Patty Murray, the state Board of Education, and State Senator Rosemary McAuliffe. Appropriate mentoring for the kids will need to be provided, including participation by legislators. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction will make resources available to support the program and assist the participating kids and adults. The current structure and schedule of the legislative process is a barrier to participation by kids that can be made more accessible to them.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Sen. Jacobsen, Prime Sponsor; Sen. McAuliffe; Alex Jonlin; Elliot Silvers, Realtors; Mary Dean, Community Youth Services, Lacey City Council; Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

House Amendment(s): The amendment adds a minimum age of fourteen for appointment to the Council and changes the report date from February 15 to December 1. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is directed to provide administration, coordination, and facilitation assistance to the Council, in place of legislative staff assistance. The Senate and House of Representatives are authorized to provide policy and fiscal briefings and assistance with drafting proposed legislation. The OSPI and the legislature are granted immunity from liability for injury incurred or caused by a member of the Council in the course of Council activities. An expiration date of June 30, 2007 is added.

Passed House: 53-43.