

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5196

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Relations

Title: An act relating to how the legislature may convene a special session.

Brief Description: Describing how the legislature may convene a special session.

Sponsors: Senators Billig, Braun, Fortunato, Holy, Hunt, Van De Wege, Wagoner and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 2/16/22, 2/23/22 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Sets procedures for the Legislature to call a special session by resolution.
- Requires a two-thirds vote in each chamber to approve a resolution calling a special session.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Valdez, Chair; Lekanoff, Vice Chair; Volz, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dolan, Graham and Gregerson.

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

The Washington State Legislature meets every year in regular session, beginning on the second Monday in January. The regular session lasts up to 105 consecutive days in odd-numbered years, and up to 60 consecutive days in even-numbered years.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Under the Constitution, the Legislature may also meet in a special session for up to 30 consecutive days. The special session may be called by proclamation of the Governor, or it may be convened by a resolution adopted by the Legislature. Such a resolution must be approved by at least two-thirds of the members in each the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Legislature is authorized to adopt procedures to govern a vote to convene a special session during interim.

The resolution convening the special session must specify the purposes for the special session, and the Legislature may consider only measures germane to the purposes expressed in the resolution. However, the Legislature may consider additional purposes if it passes a subsequent resolution by a two-thirds vote in each chamber. If the special session is called by the Governor, the proclamation must state the purposes for the session, but it is not binding on the Legislature.

Under Joint Rules adopted by the House of Representatives and the Senate at the beginning of the biennium, a resolution calling for a special session may be presented by a member to the Rules Committees of the two chambers. The resolution must include the date, time, and purposes for convening the special session. If a majority of each of the two Rules Committees approves of the resolution, the entire Legislature then votes on whether to convene a special session. A special session is called if two-thirds of the members of each chamber vote in favor of the resolution.

Summary of Bill:

The language of the Joint Rules regarding the procedures for calling special sessions is codified into statute.

As such, a resolution calling for a special session may be presented by a member to the Rules Committees of the two chambers. The resolution must include the date, time, and purposes for convening the special session. If a majority of each of the two Rules Committees approves of the resolution, the entire Legislature then votes on whether to convene a special session. A special session is called if two-thirds of the members of each chamber vote in favor of the resolution.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Legislature's power to call itself into special session is vital, even if it has never been used. The Constitution permits the Legislature to call a special session in accordance with its rules. The Legislature has adopted such rules in its Joint Rules, but there have been years where Joint Rules are not adopted, such as in 2020. The purpose of this bill is to codify the process so there is no gray area about what to do in such years. For simplicity's sake, the bill just copies the Joint Rules.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Andy Billig, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.