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**SENATE BILL 5206**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** Senators MacEwen, Hunt, and Holy

AN ACT Relating to intercollegiate athletic conference participation; amending RCW 28B.10.703; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that it is in the public's interest to preserve the shared state history and athletic achievement of the University of Washington and Washington State University by maintaining these schools in the same athletic conference. Further, the legislature finds that this historic rivalry has existed since 1900 and contributed to a shared history between the two higher education institutions that can not be replicated in separate athletic conferences. In cases such as the University of Texas and Texas A&M University, where historic in-state rivals have departed a shared athletic conference, the traditions surrounding that rivalry have fallen by the wayside. Further, the legislature finds that it is in the best interest of the student athletes that the opportunity to play in-state rivals remains a feature across the multitude of sports supported at each institution.

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.10.703 and 1977 ex.s. c 169 s 32 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The governing boards of each of the state universities, the regional universities, The Evergreen State College, and community colleges in addition to their other duties prescribed by law shall have the power and authority to establish programs for intercollegiate athletic competition. Such competition may include participation as a member of an athletic conference or conferences, in accordance with conference rules.

(2) The governing boards of the University of Washington and Washington State University must jointly participate in the same athletic conference. The governing boards of the University of Washington and Washington State University may jointly recommend participation in a different athletic conference, subject to approval by the legislature.

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