

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2631

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Education
Capital Facilities & Financing*

Title: An act relating to school construction funding.

Brief Description: Changing school construction financing.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Peery, Brough, H. Sommers, Neher, Sheldon, Roland, Valle, Paris, Pruitt, Mitchell, Prentice, Betrozoff, Rasmussen, P. Johnson and J. Kohl.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, January 30, 1992, DPS;
Capital Facilities & Financing, February 5, 1992, DPS(ED-A CFF).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 17 members: Representatives Peery, Chair; G. Fisher, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Betrozoff; Broback; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Dorn; Jones; J. Kohl; Neher; Rasmussen; Roland; H. Sommers; and Valle.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 1 member: Representative P. Johnson.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: The state Board of Education is responsible for allocating state funds to school districts for school construction and modernization.

Historically, state funds for school construction and modernization have been generated from revenues from common school trust lands, which are managed by the Department of Natural Resources. For a variety of reasons, the amount of revenue from these lands has dropped. At the same time, the demand for new school construction and modernization has significantly increased. This trend is expected to continue.

To fund the gap between the reduction in available funds and the increasing demand, the 1991 Legislature authorized the issuance of \$170 million in bonds. It is expected that an additional \$176 million will be needed this biennium to fund projects approved by the state board. Repayment of bonds results in a biennial loss in revenue to the general fund of approximately \$18 million for each \$100 million of bonds sold.

Several options have been suggested to provide other dedicated revenue sources for school construction. It also has been suggested that efforts be made to use existing school buildings more efficiently prior to funding new construction.

There are a number of ways to increase building utilization, including double-shifting and using a multi-track, year-round school calendar. When using this modified school calendar, students are divided into different tracks. Each track is staggered and scheduled throughout the entire year. While the number of days a child attends school might remain the same (e.g. 180 days), the number of days the building is used increases, as does the building's pupil capacity. Increases in capacity of up to 40-50 percent have been reported.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The state Board of Education shall allocate funds for the modernization and construction of school facilities based on a priority system. For the funding of construction of new school facilities to meet enrollment growth in fiscal year 1993 and thereafter, priority shall be given to projects in school districts that have implemented a modified school calendar or a schedule designed to increase the pupil capacity of the district's school buildings.

The state board may allocate funds, if appropriated, to school districts for planning and implementing a modified school calendar.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The effective date was delayed until fiscal year 1993. Instead of getting the "highest priority," school districts that used their buildings more efficiently would receive "priority." A provision was added that directs the state board to submit to the Legislature the board's plan for implementing the new priority system.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 23, 1992.

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

Testimony For: There is a large - and growing - gap between the demand for school construction funding and the available revenue. Using school buildings more efficiently, including moving to a multi-track, year-round schedule, is a good way to address the funding problem. In addition, year-round education has many educational benefits.

Testimony Against: Moving to a year-round schedule is disruptive to parents and students. Many school districts that have tried year-round schedules have returned to a traditional calendar. Year-round schedules should not be mandated by the state.

Witnesses: Kathleen Anderson, state Board of Education (supports in concept); Don Gale, parent (opposes); Dick Ducharme, Master Builders (supports); Jerry Hansen, Washington Association of School Administrators (opposes); Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (supports in concept); Terry Melchin, citizen (opposes); and Bob Fisher, WEA (not opposed).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
CAPITAL FACILITIES & FINANCING**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill by Committee on Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill as amended by Committee on Capital Facilities & Financing do pass.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives H. Sommers, Chair; Rasmussen, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Neher, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beck; Braddock; Brough; Fraser; Ogden; Peery; and Wang.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7153).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Capital Facilities & Financing Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Education: Two technical amendments are made to make the wording of the bill consistent. The state board's consideration of modified school calendars in its priority system takes effect in fiscal year 1994, rather than 1993.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 23, 1992.

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

Testimony For: Modified school calendars allow flexibility, offer greater efficiency of facility use, and can enhance educational opportunities, especially with enrichment programs during interim periods. The bill encourages

districts to plan and allows a forum for further discussion of the idea of modified school years.

Testimony Against: There is a great deal unknown about modified school calendars, including questions about their cost effectiveness. Many districts have returned to regular school year schedules after trying a modified schedule.

Witnesses: Kathleen Anderson, State Board of Education; George Foster Tyler; Pat O'Brien; Terry Melchin; Ray Tobiasen, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Duane Slate, Washington School District Association.