

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5375

AS PASSED SENATE, JANUARY 24, 1992

Brief Description: Eliminating the masters degree requirement for teachers.

SPONSORS: Senators Anderson, Rasmussen, Bailey, Johnson, Metcalf, Matson, McCaslin, Thorsness, Roach, Cantu, Oke, Craswell, A. Smith and L. Smith.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Anderson, Craswell, Metcalf, Murray, Oke, Pelz, Rinehart, and A. Smith.

Staff: Mich'l Prentice Needham (786-7439)

Hearing Dates: February 20, 1991; February 25, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In 1987, new teacher certification requirements were enacted as part of omnibus education legislation. After August 31, 1992, all teachers seeking continuing "professional level" certification will be required to have a masters degree in teaching, or the arts, sciences, or humanities.

SUMMARY:

The masters degree requirement for continuing teacher certification is repealed.

The initial certificate is valid for seven years and may be reinstated pursuant to State Board of Education rules.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Continuing, relevant education is important, but the master's degree requirement does not in and of itself make better teachers. The recent state teacher salary survey showed that Washington teachers are already the most highly educated teachers in the country.

The master's degree requirement affects teachers at the beginning of their career, when they can least afford it.

Half of the students in teacher preparation programs have student loans to repay.

There are limited slots in masters degree programs in the state and a lack of programs for place-bound teachers. An individual's ability to teach in the state should not depend upon possession of a master's degree.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

The master's degree requirement was only one component of 1987's comprehensive education reform legislation. A Rand Corporation study in 1987 showed that coupling salary increases with increased educational requirements will enhance the teaching profession.

As school restructuring moves more decisions to the school and classroom level, teachers are increasingly expected to analyze complex problems and participate in management decisions. Master's programs train teachers how to evaluate situations and respond with a broad repertoire of skills.

Pre-service master's programs can help solve some of the logistical problems created by the master's degree requirement. The requirement can also be improved through the development of master's programs based at the school site.

TESTIFIED: PRO: Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association; Devin Gruver, Judy Hartmann, Washington Education Association; Marcia Costello, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Walter Ball, Association of Washington School Principals; CON: Mary McKnew, Governor's Office, Carol Merz, University of Puget Sound; William Katz, Eastern Washington University; Don Cummings, Central Washington University; NEUTRAL: Kris Van Gorkom, Washington Association of School Administrators