
SENATE BILL 6698

State of Washington

56th Legislature

2000 Regular Session

By Senators Thibaudeau, McDonald, Snyder, Winsley, Jacobsen, Rasmussen, Haugen, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles and Costa

Read first time 01/24/2000. Referred to Committee on State & Local Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to citizen participation in the discussion of
2 public issues; adding new sections to chapter 43.63A RCW; and providing
3 an expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that some
6 citizens have difficulty accessing political processes that rely on
7 public hearings held at locations that are distant from their residence
8 or workplace. To increase public participation in the political
9 process, the legislature intends to establish a self-funding pilot
10 process by which citizens can receive information about public issues
11 and provide feedback to elected officials in a convenient, local
12 setting.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The office of citizen councilor is
14 created in accordance with section 10 of this act. According to
15 Webster's dictionary, "councilor" means an official advisor to a
16 sovereign or chief magistrate. Any citizen registered to vote who
17 volunteers to act as an official government advisor may become a
18 citizen councilor on request by sending a letter to the department of

1 community, trade, and economic development or calling a special toll-
2 free number and paying a nominal fee as set by the steering committee.
3 Citizen councilors shall act collectively as official advisors and a
4 sounding board for public officials and agencies, legislative study
5 committees, and the department of community, trade, and economic
6 development on issues of public interest or concern. Conveners of
7 citizen councilor groups shall be those designated by the citizen
8 councilor coordinator or deputy citizen councilor coordinator under
9 section 4 of this act from among citizen councilors who volunteer to
10 host a group. Every effort shall be made to assign citizen councilors
11 to a group that meets at a convenient time and place. Meetings will
12 usually be in residence or work area zip codes.

13 (2) Citizen councilors may participate:

14 (a) In a citizen councilor organizational group under section 7 of
15 this act;

16 (b) In a citizen councilor group usually organized by residence or
17 work area zip code with the assistance of the citizen councilor
18 coordinator; or

19 (c) As an individual if the individual is unable to attend meetings
20 in groups due to age, disability, or remote location.

21 (3) Citizen councilors will be reassigned a group on request to
22 assure that their group meeting place, time, and makeup is convenient
23 and compatible.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department of community, trade, and
25 economic development:

26 (1) Shall determine suggested issues for public discussion
27 approximately quarterly but not more than monthly from suggestions
28 received from public officials, agencies, legislators, and individual
29 citizen councilors and recommend an appropriate issue or issues for
30 consideration by citizen councilors to a steering committee. The
31 steering committee shall be composed of four voting members: One
32 member of the minority and one member of the majority party from each
33 house of the legislature. Other nonvoting members of the steering
34 committee shall be: (a) A representative from the governor's office,
35 (b) a representative from any organization participating with over
36 fifty groups of eight to twelve persons under section 5(7) of this act,
37 and (c) the citizen councilor coordinator and deputy citizen councilor
38 coordinator selected as provided in section 4 of this act except that

1 the citizen councilor coordinator or deputy citizen councilor
2 coordinator may vote on the steering committee in case of a tie;

3 (2) After approval by the legislative members of the steering
4 committee, shall assign the issue or issues approved for discussion to
5 the volunteer citizen councilor coordinator for preparation and
6 implementation by value reporters and others. Value reporters assigned
7 to gather information on issues shall be careful to present all issues
8 as evenhandedly as possible, taking care to present the generally
9 prevailing viewpoints surrounding an issue or issues from experts,
10 officials, and others in an effort to provide the public with
11 information needed for discussion. Value reporters shall conduct
12 interviews of experts, officials, and others to solicit their various
13 viewpoints and record such interviews on audio or video tape for later
14 reproduction and distribution to citizen councilor groups. Before any
15 materials are released to citizen councilor groups, however, persons
16 interviewed and taped shall approve their taped interview for release
17 or complete another interview to their satisfaction, otherwise their
18 statement shall not be included in materials sent to citizens;

19 (3) Shall approve the public information materials prepared by the
20 citizen councilor coordinator, deputy citizen councilor coordinator,
21 and staffs and authorize its distribution to citizen councilors to the
22 steering committee for final approval before distribution.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The offices of citizen councilor coordinator
24 and deputy citizen councilor coordinator are created within the
25 department of community, trade, and economic development. The director
26 of community, trade, and economic development shall appoint the citizen
27 councilor coordinator and deputy citizen councilor coordinator with the
28 advice and consent of the steering committee. The citizen councilor
29 coordinator and deputy citizen councilor coordinator shall serve at the
30 pleasure of the director of community, trade, and economic development,
31 until terminated with the approval of the steering committee, and shall
32 be volunteers and serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed
33 for actual expenses incurred in carrying out their duties under
34 sections 1 through 10 of this act as funds are available.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The citizen councilor coordinator and deputy
36 citizen councilor coordinator shall:

- 1 (1) Promote to the citizens of the state the citizen councilor
2 program and its contribution to public and private planning processes;
- 3 (2) Oversee preparation, tabulation, summarization, and
4 dissemination of data and information by the volunteer staff;
- 5 (3) Receive, on behalf of the citizen councilor revolving fund,
6 gifts and donations of real or personal property, including cash and
7 in-kind services;
- 8 (4) Hire a value reporter and other paid staff to assist the
9 volunteer staff if funds are available;
- 10 (5) Contract for any services including without limitation toll-
11 free telephone number and answering services, keypunch, computer,
12 scanning, recording, reporting, research, consulting, printing, and
13 mailing to carry out this chapter as long as the providers of these
14 services either work without financial compensation or are unrelated to
15 the citizen councilor coordinator or deputy citizen councilor
16 coordinator;
- 17 (6) Solicit volunteers to assist in administering the program from
18 community service, educational, civic, business, religious, and other
19 organizations;
- 20 (7) Solicit citizen councilor groups from existing organizations;
- 21 (8) Solicit individual citizen councilors to participate in local
22 groups organized by mutual convenience usually within the same
23 residence or work zip code area;
- 24 (9) Assign value reporters to interview scholars, experts, public
25 officials, planners, leaders, and others on tape concerning topics of
26 discussion assigned by the department of community, trade, and economic
27 development;
- 28 (10) Produce audio or video cassette tapes, or both, and printed
29 materials evenhandedly;
- 30 (11) Mail public information materials to citizen councilor
31 conveners or individual citizen councilors, or both;
- 32 (12) Provide, at cost, group mailing labels of its own conveners on
33 request of an organization participating or to a county, municipality,
34 or school district if a private iteration of their own constituents is
35 desired at their own time and expense;
- 36 (13) Scan or tabulate, or both, citizen councilor response sheets
37 using, as appropriate, the "Fast Forum" computer program that is
38 available without cost to the citizen councilor program and the

1 University of Washington academic computing services as a nonprofit,
2 external user;

3 (14) Mail organizational, community, school, business, or church
4 profiles to the leaders of such participating organizations for their
5 information and without cost when they have over fifty groups
6 responding state-wide;

7 (15) Prepare summary reports of data generated and press releases;

8 (16) Mail summary reports and other information to all citizen
9 councilors, conveners, participating organizations, and to those public
10 officials who have indicated to the citizen councilor coordinator that
11 they are interested; and

12 (17) Maintain data generated for public and media reference in the
13 department of community, trade, and economic development.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The citizen councilor coordinator shall
15 actively encourage citizen councilor groups to form throughout the
16 state. Citizen councilor groups shall usually consist of a minimum of
17 eight and a maximum of twelve regularly assigned members and meet on
18 call of their convener at times and places they deem most appropriate
19 during a thirty-day or other designated time period. Citizen councilor
20 groups shall normally meet three or four times per year on state
21 issues. They shall have the opportunity to listen to audio or video
22 tapes articulating an issue of public interest or concern and study
23 other materials prepared or authorized as described in section 3 of
24 this act. Citizen councilors shall have the opportunity to respond
25 anonymously making their opinions known on individual mark-sense
26 response sheets for return to the citizen councilor coordinator for
27 keypunching or optical scanning, tabulation, and analysis.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Eight through twelve citizens from
29 organizations such as, but not limited to, community, civic,
30 associations, cooperatives, unions, church, business, or school
31 district groups may enroll as an organizational group with their own
32 convener designated. An organizational profile report shall be
33 provided the leaders of organizations with fifty or more groups without
34 cost to inform them of how their members responded to public issues
35 posed or approved by the department of community, trade, and economic
36 development and shall be open to public inspection in the offices of
37 the department of community, trade, and economic development. If

1 additional profiles or services are requested by an organization of its
2 own constituents, the policy, rules, and fees to cover such costs shall
3 be as determined by the citizen councilor coordinator. Organizations
4 with fifty or more groups may purchase mailing labels of their group
5 conveners at cost and prepare and mail their own group materials for
6 tabulation at their own effort and expense. This data shall not be
7 tabulated by the citizen councilor coordinator and shall not be
8 combined with the public data nor available for public inspection at
9 the department of community, trade, and economic development.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Each citizen councilor shall be asked to
11 make donations from time to time to help cover the costs of the citizen
12 councilor program estimated at ten to fifteen dollars per person per
13 year at 1995 costs. It is also the intention of the legislature that
14 donations and gifts be solicited from public-spirited individuals,
15 businesses, and foundations for the purpose of funding the program.
16 However, since all costs of this program are provided by donations with
17 no funds from public sources, the citizen councilor coordinator shall
18 use his or her discretion in determining the scale and the scope of the
19 program so that expenses do not exceed available funds.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** A citizen councilor revolving fund is
21 created and shall consist of donations collected under this chapter and
22 any moneys appropriated to it by law for specific purposes. The state
23 treasurer shall be custodian of the revolving fund. Disbursements from
24 the revolving fund shall be on authorization of the citizen councilor
25 coordinator. In order to maintain an effective expenditure and revenue
26 control, the citizen councilor revolving fund shall be subject in all
27 respects to chapter 43.88 RCW, but no appropriation is required to
28 permit expenditures and payment of obligations from the fund.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** (1) The department of community, trade, and
30 economic development may provide the citizen councilor coordinator and
31 his or her volunteer staff with space in existing offices and with
32 clerical services from existing staff to assist in establishing and
33 conducting the citizen councilor program. Appropriations are not
34 required, but the director of community, trade, and economic
35 development may consider the services provided under this section in
36 submitting the department's budget.

1 (2) The citizen councilor coordinator shall seek to obtain
2 donations from citizen councilor organizational groups, citizen
3 councilors, and public-spirited individuals, community service
4 organizations, businesses, and foundations to cover the costs of the
5 program. When ten thousand dollars in donations have been received,
6 the department of community, trade, and economic development shall
7 authorize the citizen councilor coordinator to establish a toll-free
8 telephone number and answering service and to develop a list of the
9 names, addresses, and telephone numbers of persons and groups
10 interested in serving as citizen councilors, citizen councilor
11 conveners, or citizen councilor organizational groups, or in making
12 donations. When forty thousand dollars in donations have been
13 received, the citizen councilor coordinator may initiate the new
14 communication process contemplated in sections 1 through 10 of this act
15 and continue it at a scope and scale that is supportable by the
16 resources available.

17 (3) In the event the program under this chapter fails to support
18 itself and is necessary to be terminated by the department of
19 community, trade, and economic development or expires, funds remaining
20 after payment of all outstanding expenses and disposal of equipment and
21 supplies owned shall be deposited in the general fund.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 11.** Sections 1 through 10 of this act expire
23 June 30, 2004.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** Sections 1 through 10 of this act are each
25 added to chapter 43.63A RCW.

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