

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1570

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
State Government

**Title:** An act relating to the state poet laureate.

**Brief Description:** Creating the position of poet laureate.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kessler, Kenney, Holmquist, Hudgins and Santos.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government: 2/21/03, 2/28/03 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Creates the position of state Poet Laureate to promote and encourage poetry within the state.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Tom and Wallace.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Shabro, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Nixon.

**Staff:** Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

**Background:**

The Washington State Arts Commission (Arts Commission) was established in 1961. In 1965 the Legislature authorized the Arts Commission to designate a poet laureate for the state, but that authority was repealed in 1985. The Arts Commission develops, sponsors, promotes and administers activities, projects, or programs related to the growth and development of the arts and humanities in the state and assists any person or public or private agency in that effort.

Most states have a poet laureate. Only Arizona, Hawaii, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Ohio and Washington do not.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The position of Poet Laureate is created to engage in activities to promote and encourage poetry within the state. The Poet Laureate will give a minimum of 20 readings, workshops, lectures, and/or presentations for Washington educational institutions and communities in geographically diverse areas over a two-year term.

Selection of a Poet Laureate will be made by a committee appointed by the Arts Commission. Representatives on the committee may include members from the Washington State Library, education community, the Washington Commission for the Humanities, the publishing community, and the community of Washington poets. The Commission and the committee will establish the criteria used for the selection of the Poet Laureate.

The Poet Laureate must be a published poet, a resident of the state, active in the poetry community, and willing and able to promote poetry in Washington state throughout the two-year term. The Poet Laureate may not serve more than two consecutive two-year terms. Compensation will be at a professional rate as determined by the Arts Commission.

Funding of the Poet Laureate Program may be from gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources. An interest earning account is created in the custody of the State Treasurer and all monies deposited into the account are used only for the Poet Laureate program.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Under the substitute bill, administration of the Poet Laureate Program is by the Arts Commission. The Arts Commission will determine a professional compensation rate for the Poet Laureate. The program may be funded through gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources and an interest earning account is established in the custody of the State Treasurer.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** This is a valuable program in a time when video games dominate children's activities. It offers more exposure for our cowboy poets. The Washington Commission for the Humanities supports the program and will partner with poets to raise funds for an endowment. The Poet Laureate is a beacon, a single voice to attract all people. Having a Poet Laureate means that language is taken seriously. The Poet Laureate will be an advocate for language, something profound, but with few words. The Arts Commission supports the bill and wishes to make the selection a credible process by identifying criteria that will lead to a good selection. The program must provide public benefits and the poet must be compensated.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Representative Hinkle; Representative Hudgins; Amanda Swain, Washington Commission for the Humanities; J. Glenn Evans, Poets West; Kris Tucker, Washington State Arts Commission; Megan West, Tristan Pierce and Jhaleh Akhavan, North Thurston High School; and Peter Zilinsky, Washington Poets Association.