

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1115

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to school directors' associations.

Brief Description: Providing for school directors' associations.

Sponsors: Representatives Tom, Fromhold, Hunter, Jarrett and Talcott.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/2/05, 2/14/05 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Making membership in the Washington State School Directors Association optional and requiring at least five months prior written notice from school boards that intend to withdraw from the association.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Hunter, Shabro and Tom.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, McDermott and Santos.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

By law, school boards must be members of, and pay dues to, the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA). The WSSDA is a state agency but all state funding for the agency is provided through the members' dues. The WSSDA is required to provide the following services for its members:

- coordinating policies, control, and management of school districts;
- conducting studies and providing information on ways to increase administrative efficiencies;
- purchasing liability insurance for school directors;
- providing advice and assistance to school boards; and

- upon request, providing specialized services, research, and consultation in particular problem areas if the services are unavailable from other specific entities.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Membership in the Washington State School Directors' Association is voluntary beginning January 1, 2006. School boards must provide at least five months written notice before withdrawing from the association. Only the members of WSSDA are required to pay dues to the association.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

References to alternative organizations were removed and replaced with language making membership in WSSDA voluntary but requiring written notice of a district's intent to withdraw.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 2005.

Testimony For: Under the rules adopted by WSSDA, school districts pay dues based on the number of students they educate, but decisions are made using a weighted formula that gives large districts a disproportionately low voice in the decision-making process. The association promised to review and address the issue as a result of legislation introduced during the 2004 legislative session, but took no steps to begin the review until January 2005.

Testimony Against: Until 1969, WSSDA was a private organization. The Legislature made it into a state agency with specified responsibilities because it felt that the state's interest was served by having one organization to provide school directors with training and coordination. The association gave up its independent status in return for universal membership. Because the association serves districts that have diverse needs, it is forced to focus on the issues that unite school districts. The association acts as a clearinghouse for districts in legal and policy matters, and helps to ensure some uniformity in the implementation of laws and rules. Although members of the association have never had universal agreement on all issues, the process they use to try and reach consensus benefits all districts.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Tom, prime sponsor.

(Opposed) Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association; and Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.