

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6659

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As of January 26, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to creation of a full-time state legislature.

**Brief Description:** Creating a full-time state legislature.

**Sponsors:** Senator Swecker.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 1/26/06.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Cindy Fazio (786-7405)

**Background:** In 2004, the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials (Commission) hired a consultant to conduct a review of legislative and judicial salaries using the Willis Point Factor. The following information is pulled from the consultant's November 18, 2004, report to the Commission.

The state of Washington initially used eleven states as salary comparison states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wisconsin. The states compare in per capita state expenditures, per capita income, average hourly earnings, number of full-time state employees per capita, and per capita state expenditures for education. Two additional states were added because of their proximity to Washington: Idaho and Montana.

Ten of these thirteen states pay their legislators a salary. Three pay only per diem rates for their legislators. Three of the states are reported by the National Conference of State Legislators to have full-time legislatures. These are California, Illinois, and Michigan. Their legislative members' annual salaries are \$99,000, \$55,788, and \$79,650, respectively. Another group of legislatures from the states is designated as hybrids. These are citizen legislatures who report they devote two-thirds of a full-time job to being legislators but do not receive sufficient income from their legislative work to make a living. Washington is included in this group. The salaries in this group range from a low of \$15,396 to a high of \$34,227 (Washington).

**Summary of Bill:** The legislative positions of senator and representative are deemed full-time positions. No member of the Legislature may hold any office, position, or other employment that would interfere with the legislator's ability to devote the equivalent of full-time employment attention to the business of the Legislature.

The act is dependent on the salary commission's adoption of a salary commensurate with full-time legislative duties, and if the act survives a referendum challenge.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** Washington is at a critical juncture. The day to day complexities of being a legislator have changed considerably. We have a growing population. We are dependent on international trade. We must operate in the global marketplace. Managing all of this is critical. Legislators deserve the time to do critical analysis of the issues. I believe that some of our best legislation has come from interim projects when we have had time to get all the stakeholders together, had a complete vetting of the issue, then thoughtfully crafted legislation. I did not intend that all outside employment be completely prohibited. I know that some people may be small business owners and the like. We need to maintain our broad spectrum of citizen legislators but we are losing the middle group because they cannot afford to be legislators full-time and not receive a full-time salary. I think we would have less bills to deal with if we dealt with the issues more pro-actively, not reactively.

**Testimony Against:** I did feel sorry for you but now I think you are trying to micro-manage. Why don't you base your salary on the number of bills you pass? I think this bill is just an attempt to double your salaries. People might have sympathy for your situation if you were doing a good job but people will not want to reward you if you take away their right to the initiative process.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Senator Dan Swecker, Prime Sponsor.

CON: Tim Eyman, Save Our \$30 Tabs.