

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5183

As Passed Senate, February 28, 2007

Title: An act relating to cost savings on course materials for students at community and technical colleges.

Brief Description: Regarding cost savings on course materials for students at community and technical colleges.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Hatfield, Roach, Pridemore, Poulsen, Holmquist, Sheldon, Fairley, Keiser, Kline, Kilmer, Hobbs, Kauffman, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/24/07, 1/31/07 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/28/07, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5183 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey and Schoesler.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: A study conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that college textbook prices nearly tripled from December 1986 to December 2004. These prices increased by 186 percent, while tuition and fees increased by 240 percent, and overall inflation was 72 percent during the same time period. The GAO study attributes textbook cost increases to several factors. The primary reason the cost of textbooks has increased in recent years is because of "bundling," which is the addition of supplemental materials, such as CD-ROMs. Another factor cited in the study was the frequent revision of textbooks.

Each of the six public baccalaureate institutions in the state is affiliated with a bookstore. In 2006, the Legislature passed legislation requiring the boards of regents of the state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College to work with affiliated bookstores, students, and faculty representatives to adopt rules for affiliated bookstores, and directed faculty to consider price when assigning course materials. The legislation did not include community and technical colleges.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Community and technical colleges must adopt rules for their affiliated bookstores. The institutions' rules must provide students with the option to purchase unbundled materials when possible, provide for the disclosure of changes to textbooks and costs, and promote book buy-backs. Faculty are required to consider the least costly practices in assigning course materials. Rules promulgated that affect the terms and conditions of employment of faculty are subject to collective bargaining.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This legislation dealing with the four year institutions passed unanimously last year. The cost of books is causing some students to delay purchasing the course materials they currently need until they can save enough money to buy them. This is a relatively hidden cost, but a significant one for community and technical college students. Some libraries have these textbooks, but the demand exceeds the availability.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hatfield, prime sponsor; Michael Treiber, Grays Harbor College; Chris Reykdahl, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; Philip Jack, American Federation of Teachers-Washington and Washington Education Association (WEA); Wendy Rader-Konafalski, WEA.