

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 5254

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### C 103 L 08

Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Authorizing a grant program for industry skill panels.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Kilmer, Kastama, Fairley, Rockefeller, Kauffman, Marr, Hatfield, Weinstein, Keiser, Sheldon, McAuliffe, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Shin, Murray, Tom, Regala, Spanel and Kline).

#### **Senate Committee on Higher Education**

**Senate Committee on Economic Development, Trade & Management**

**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**

**House Committee on Higher Education**

**House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Education**

**Background:** Industry Skill Panels are regional alliances of businesses, labor, and education and training providers in key industry clusters. The panels assess skill gaps in an industry and design and implement strategies to close those gaps. The formation of panels is overseen by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board). They work in conjunction with Centers of Excellence organized by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and have relied on funding from the federal Workforce Investment Act. Washington was the first state in the nation to create a system of such panels and serves as a mentor to other states. There are no Skill Panels in many key industry clusters.

In the spring of 2006, the Governor directed the Workforce Board to review Washington's workforce development system and recommend improvements. In response, The Workforce Board issued the report "Washington Works: Strengthening the Workforce for Washington's Future." The report recommended a series of steps to strengthen the connections between workforce development and economic development programs, including a recommendation that state funds be used to establish and sustain Industry Skill Panels in key economic clusters and build on existing work to leverage private investments.

**Summary:** The Workforce Board is to allocate grants on a competitive basis to establish and support Industry Skill Panels. Workforce development councils, community and technical colleges, economic development councils, private career schools, chambers of commerce, trade associations, and apprenticeship councils may apply for grants. Applicants must provide an employer match of at least 25 percent to be eligible. Industry Skill Panels are to identify strategies and solutions addressing workforce skill needs. The Board is to establish standards that identify the expectations for Skill Panel products and services. Continued funding depends upon meeting the standards. The Workforce Board is to report results annually to the Governor and Legislature.

#### **Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	47	0	
House	78	18	(House amended)

Senate 47 0 (Senate concurred)

**Effective:** June 12, 2008