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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 8402**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Government Operations & Security (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Roach, and Liias)

WHEREAS, An independent, creative, and competent legislature distinguishes a democratic system from more authoritarian forms of government; and

WHEREAS, Questions arise as to whether the Washington state legislature is structurally, functionally, operationally, and procedurally satisfactory for resolving today's complex and divisive issues; and

WHEREAS, The time demands have expanded significantly for legislators as a result of increasing numbers of constituents, constituent and public access to legislators, and state operating, capital, and transportation budgets; and

WHEREAS, A 2008 study of full-time and part-time legislators by the national conference of state legislators found that part-time legislators spend nearly as much time on the job as full-time legislators despite a significant difference in both pay and number of staff; and

WHEREAS, Legislators tend to regard their own legislature as somehow incomparable, without regard to how the Washington state legislature compares with other state legislatures;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, By the Senate of the state of Washington, the House of Representatives concurring, That the Washington state commission on the evaluation of the legislature be established within the legislature to evaluate the legislature's decision-making capabilities based on the following categories:

Structure and Function (e.g., restrictions on frequency, duration, length, and agendas of sessions, general purpose and size of staff, facilities, provisions for management and coordination);

Accountability (e.g., explicit rules and procedures, adequacy of information and public access to it, internal accountability);

Informedness (e.g., sufficient time, standing committees, interim activities, professional staff resources, fiscal review capabilities);

Independence (e.g., frequency and duration of sessions, legislative independence from executive branch, capability for effective oversight of executive operations, interest groups, conflicts of interest); and

Representativeness (e.g., diversity and compensation); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That:

(1) The commission consist of fifteen members appointed by the legislature. Four members of the senate, two from each of the two major political parties, appointed by the president of the senate, and four members of the house of representatives, two from each of the two major political parties, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, shall serve as members. The legislative members shall appoint seven citizen members, one of whom shall be the chair. The legislative members shall consider nominations for citizen membership based upon maintaining a balanced and diverse distribution of philosophical perspectives on the proper roles of government, society, and the individual;

(2) All commission members serve at the pleasure of the legislature. The position of any legislative member shall be deemed vacated whenever such member ceases to be a member of the house from which he or she was appointed. Any vacancies occurring in the membership of the commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments;

(3)(a) Nonlegislative members be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060;

(b) Legislative members be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 44.04.120;

(4) A simple majority of the membership constitutes a quorum for the purpose of conducting business;

(5) Staff support for the commission must be provided by senate committee services and the house of representatives office of program research;

(6) The expenses of the commission must be paid jointly by the senate and the house of representatives. Commission expenditures are subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their successor committees; and

(7) In carrying out its duties, the commission may establish such relationships with public and private institutions, local governments, private industry, community organizations, other state legislatures, and other segments of the general public as may be needed to evaluate the Washington state legislature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Washington state commission on the evaluation of the legislature report to the legislature its findings and recommendations by December 1, 2016; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the commission terminate December 31, 2016.