

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2637

C 102 L 16
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating the Washington state historic cemetery preservation capital grant program.

Sponsors: Representatives Manweller, DeBolt, G. Hunt and Zeiger.

House Committee on Capital Budget
Senate Committee on Government Operations & Security
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

The Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), under the direction of the State Historic Preservation Officer, has responsibilities under both federal and state law for helping preserve the cultural and historic resources of the state. The DAHP administers the Heritage Barn and Historic County Courthouse Rehabilitation grant programs. Related to cemeteries, the DAHP's Human Remains and Cemeteries program investigates non-forensic human skeletal remains found in the state of Washington and the recording of all known cemeteries and burial sites within the state. The DAHP is required to develop and maintain a centralized database and geographic information systems spatial layer of all known cemeteries and known sites of burials of human remains. The database, currently numbering 1,457 cemeteries, is updated on an annual basis.

Cemetery Definitions in Statute.

In general, a "cemetery" includes any one, or a combination, of the following, in a place used or intended to be used for placement of human remains and dedicated for cemetery purposes: a burial park, for earth interments; a mausoleum, for crypt interments, a columbarium, for permanent niche interments; or, in the case of abandoned and historic cemeteries and historic graves, any burial site, burial grounds, or place where five or more human remains are buried. A "historical cemetery" is any burial site or grounds which contain human remains buried prior to November 11, 1889. Cemeteries holding a valid certificate of authority under the state Funeral and Cemetery Board, cemeteries owned or operated by any recognized religious denomination that qualifies for an exemption from property taxation, and

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cemeteries controlled or operated by a coroner, county, city, town, or cemetery district are not considered historical cemeteries.

Summary:

The Washington State Historic Cemetery Preservation Capital Grant program (Program) is created in the DAHP. The Program's public benefits include: preserving the state's historic heritage, allowing historic cemeteries to continue serving communities, and honoring military veterans. Cemetery property owners, nonprofit organizations, and local governments are eligible to apply for grants for construction, renovation, or rehabilitation projects that preserve a cemetery's historic character, features, or maintain or improve its functions. Grants may be awarded biennially, subject to appropriation. Grant awards are capped at \$50,000, adjusted each biennium for inflation. No match may be required from applicants.

The DAHP director must establish an application review committee including at least five members with expertise or a connection to historic preservation, cemetery associations, local cemetery boards, or other relevant organizations.

Applications must be submitted to the DAHP and must include a history of the cemetery. The evaluation criteria are: relative historic significance, potential lessening of maintenance and operations costs, and relative percentage of military burials. The committee must provide its prioritized list of projects for funding to the DAHP, which must execute contracts with recipients prior to work beginning. Projects must be initiated within one year and completed within two years of the award, unless approved for extension.

Grant recipients must maintain the cemetery for at least 10 years. Public access and tribal access must be provided under reasonable terms and conditions. Visits by nonprofit organizations and school groups must be offered at least one day per year. Any dismantlement, removal, substantial alteration or similar action taken by the recipient or subsequent owner within 10 years of the award will require full grant repayment within one year.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	98	0	
Senate	41	7	(Senate amended)
House	96	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 9, 2016