

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2837

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2020

Title: An act relating to expanding powers granted to state historical societies.

Brief Description: Expanding powers granted to state historical societies.

Sponsors: Representatives Boehnke and Hudgins; by request of Washington State Historical Society.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/19/20, 98-0.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/26/20, 2/28/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/03/20, 49-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes each historical society to provide grants to strengthen cultural and historical organizations statewide as funding allows.
- Grants each historical society rulemaking authority.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Muzzall, Assistant Ranking Member; Hasegawa, Hawkins and Takko.

Staff: Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

Background: The Washington State historical societies are made up of the Washington State Historical Society and the Eastern Washington State Historical Society. The governing board includes seven public officials, the Governor, secretary of state, superintendent of public instruction and four legislators who serve ex officio. The board appoints its respective director with the consent of the Governor.

Each historical society is designated a trustee for the state to:

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- collect, catalog, preserve and exhibit materials that demonstrate Washington's cultural, artistic, and natural history;
- operate state museums;
- engage in cultural, artistic, and educational activities;
- plan for and conduct celebrations of significant events in the history of the state of Washington;
- create one or more classes of membership in the society;
- engage in appropriate fund-raising activities and sale of various articles for the purposes of the society; and
- accept gifts, grants, conveyances, bequests, and devises of real or personal property.

The governing boards of the state historical societies shall adopt rules to govern and protect the receipt and expenditure of the proceeds, rents, profits, and income of all such gifts, grants, conveyances, bequests, and devises.

Summary of Bill: The powers and duties of the state historical societies are amended to authorize each historical society to provide grants to strengthen cultural and historical organizations statewide in support of organizational capacity building, public programming, educational programming, outreach, collections management, and exhibitions as funding allows.

Each historical society is authorized to adopt rules to carry out their powers and duties under the statute.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Reading books and history is important, Churchill once said that those who fail to learn history are condemned to repeat history. Founded in 1891, the historical society is the foundation of our history and our future. The state needs a good repository of historical data so the next generation can go and see the historical events. The state will not have this information if we do not support our historical societies. This bill adds language to give the agency the authority to make operating grants to heritage and cultural organizations across the state. There is a strong need for a grant program, the goal is to provide small grants as funding allows to help heritage organizations statewide. The fiscal impact is zero because it would use existing funds from existing revenue for this program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Matt Boehnke, Prime Sponsor; Allison Campbell, Washington State Historical Society.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.