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**SENATE BILL 6168**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Stanford, Frame, Nobles, and Wellman

AN ACT Relating to renewing Washington's international leadership; amending RCW 43.290.005, 43.290.020, 43.330.065, 43.15.050, 43.15.060, and 43.15.090; adding new sections to chapter 43.290 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 44.04 RCW; and repealing RCW 43.15.085.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.290 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The office of international relations and protocol shall develop a strategic international engagement plan to guide Washington's international engagement and economic development. The plan must create a common framework for the state's engagement in international activities, to include: Trade missions, economic development, and interpersonal knowledge exchanges.

(2) The office may consult with entities relevant to Washington's international presence when developing the strategic plan, including: Associate development organizations, business and civic organizations, consular officials, executive and small cabinet agencies, institutions of higher education, immigration and labor organizations, public ports, state offices, and private and nonprofit organizations.

(3) The office may utilize the resources of Results Washington for technical and operational assistance in developing the strategic plan.

(4) The office must complete an initial strategic plan by July 1, 2025. This strategic plan shall undergo periodic review to measure progress and outcomes at least every two and a half years thereafter, and it shall be fully updated at least every five years thereafter.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.290.005 and 1991 c 24 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

The legislature finds that it is in the public interest to create an office of international relations and protocol in order to: Make international relations and protocol ((~~a broad-based,~~)) focused((~~,~~)) and functional ((~~part of~~)) across state government; provide leadership in state government with respect to international relations and assist the legislature and state elected officials with international issues affecting the state; establish coordinated methods for responding to foreign governments and institutions seeking cooperative activities with and within Washington; coordinate and improve communication and resource sharing among various state offices, agencies, and educational institutions with international programs; develop and promote state policies that increase international ((~~literacy~~)) engagement and cross-cultural understanding among Washington state's citizens; expand Washington state's international cooperation role in ((~~such~~)) vital areas ((~~as the environment, education, science, culture, and sports~~)) of public policy, including but not limited to economic development, trade and industry, and tourism and sports, as well as education, culture, science, and resilience; ((~~establish coordinated methods for responding to the increasing number of inquiries by foreign governments and institutions seeking cooperative activities within Washington state; provide leadership in state government on international relations and assistance to the legislature and state elected officials on international issues affecting the state;~~)) and assist with multistate international efforts((~~; and coordinate and improve communication and resource sharing among various state offices, agencies, and educational institutions with international programs.~~

~~It is the purpose of this chapter to bring these functions together in a new office under the office of the governor in order to establish a visible, coordinated, and comprehensive approach to international relations and protocol~~)).

**Sec.**  RCW 43.290.020 and 1991 c 24 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

The office of international relations and protocol may:

(1) Create ((~~temporary~~)) advisory committees as necessary to ((~~deal with specific international issues~~)) execute its responsibilities. The duration and composition of such advisory committees may be determined by the office. Advisory committee representation may include statewide elected officials from the executive branch, or their designees, as well as representatives of the legislative branch and the judiciary. Representation may also include external organizations such as ((~~the Seattle consular corps,~~)) world affairs councils, public ports, world trade organizations, ((~~private nonprofit organizations dealing with international education or international environmental issues, organizations concerned with international understanding, businesses with experience in international relations, or other organizations deemed appropriate by the director~~)) associate development organizations, business and civic organizations, consular officials, executive and small cabinet agencies, institutions of higher education, immigration and labor organizations, public ports, state offices, and private and nonprofit organizations. The governor, or the governor's designee, shall chair such advisory committees;

(2) Designate foreign jurisdictions, such as national governments, subnational governments, and international organizations, as jurisdictions of strategic importance to Washington;

(3) Establish procedures and requirements for operations and expenditures to support and enhance state government partnership and relationships with foreign jurisdictions, particularly those identified as of strategic importance. Such operations and expenditures are intended to strengthen state agency economic development and policy cooperation, enable the implementation of the strategic international engagement plan, as determined by the director, and provide resources for government-to-government engagement, as well as support of inbound and outbound delegations to and from Washington state;

(4) Accept or request grants or gifts from citizens and other private sources to be used to defray the costs of appropriate hosting of foreign dignitaries, including appropriate gift-giving and reciprocal gift-giving, or other activities of the office. The office shall open and maintain a bank account into which it shall deposit all money received under this subsection. Such money and the interest accruing thereon shall not constitute public funds, shall be kept segregated and apart from funds of the state, and shall not be subject to appropriation or allotment by the state or subject to chapter 43.88 RCW.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.330.065 and 2023 c 470 s 2081 are each amended to read as follows:

((~~The department of commerce, in consultation with the office of protocol, the office of the secretary of state, the department of agriculture, and the employment security department[,]~~)) (1) The office of international relations and protocol, in consultation with the department of commerce, the department of agriculture, and other state agencies and offices as appropriate, shall identify up to ((~~fifteen countries~~)) 15 foreign jurisdictions that are of strategic importance to the development and diversification of Washington's international trade relations.

(2) When designating such jurisdictions of strategic importance, the office shall consider factors including:

(a) Existing or potential partnerships in key industrial sectors;

(b) The presence of cultural and people-to-people ties;

(c) The state's economic development priorities and shared interests, consistent with the state strategic international engagement plan;

(d) The presence of international trade offices or other program-based engagement conducted by state agencies; and

(e) Historic or existing bilateral agreements established on a government-to-government basis.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.290 RCW to read as follows:

The office of international relations and protocol shall:

(1) Advise and assist the governor, the legislature, and other independent elected officials on international developments that may affect the state;

(2) Establish and build government-to-government relationships between the state, foreign governments, and international organizations;

(3) Coordinate protocol for foreign dignitaries visiting the governor, the legislature, the judiciary, and other state agencies and offices, including the appropriate criteria and procedures for the signing of bilateral agreements by the governor on behalf of the state of Washington;

(4) Advise, coordinate, and support engagement between the state, foreign governments, and international partners;

(5) Establish, in coordination with the office of the premier of British Columbia, an intergovernmental exchange between the state and British Columbia, cochaired by the governor and the premier of British Columbia or their designees, concerning issues of mutual interests;

(6) Designate an international engagement advisory committee to leverage the expertise of the state's international engagement community;

(7) Assist institutions of higher education in implementing programs for international cooperation and student exchange; and

(8) Improve coordination between state government and the Washington tourism marketing authority.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 44.04 RCW to read as follows:

A Washington state—British Columbia interparliamentary exchange group is created. The purpose of the group is to facilitate legislator-to-legislator communication between the two governments, in coordination with the office of the premier of British Columbia. The state's representative for the group is the chair of the legislative committee on economic development and international relations.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.15.050 and 2003 c 265 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

The legislative international trade account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. All moneys received by the president of the senate and the secretary of state from gifts, grants, and endowments for international trade hosting, international relations, and international missions activities must be deposited in the account. Only private, nonpublic gifts, grants, and endowments may be deposited in the account. A person, as defined in RCW 42.52.010, may not donate, gift, grant, or endow more than five thousand dollars per calendar year to the legislative international trade account. Expenditures from the account may be used only for the purposes of international trade hosting, international relations, and international trade mission activities, ((~~excluding travel and lodging,~~)) in which the president and members of the senate, members of the house of representatives, and the secretary of state participate in an official capacity. An appropriation is not required for expenditures. All requests by individual legislators for use of funds from this account must be first approved by the secretary of the senate for members of the senate or the chief clerk of the house of representatives for members of the house of representatives. All expenditures from the account shall be authorized by the final signed approval of ((~~the chief clerk of the house of representatives, the secretary of the senate, and~~)) the president of the senate.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.15.060 and 2020 c 114 s 20 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Economic development and in particular international trade, tourism, and investment have become increasingly important to Washington, affecting the state's employment, revenues, and general economic well-being. Additionally, economic trends are rapidly changing and the international marketplace has become increasingly competitive as states and countries seek to improve and safeguard their own economic well-being. The purpose of the legislative committee on economic development and international relations is to provide responsive and consistent involvement by the legislature in economic development to maintain a healthy state economy and to provide employment opportunities to Washington residents.

(2) There is created a legislative committee on economic development and international relations which shall consist of ((~~six~~)) eight senators and ((~~six~~)) eight representatives from the legislature and the lieutenant governor who shall serve as chairperson. The senate members of the committee shall be appointed by the president of the senate and the house members of the committee shall be appointed by the speaker of the house. Not more than ((~~three~~)) four members from each house shall be from the same political party. Vacancies occurring shall be filled by the appointing authority.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.15.090 and 1985 c 467 s 23 are each amended to read as follows:

The legislative committee on economic development and international relations shall cooperate, act, and function with legislative committees, executive agencies, and with the councils or committees of other states and of provinces and territories of Canada similar to this committee, and with other interstate research organizations.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  RCW 43.15.085 (Legislative committee on economic development and international relations—Expenses) and 1985 c 467 s 22 are each repealed.

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