
State Government & Tribal Relations Committee

HB 2000

Brief Description: Renewing Washington's international leadership.

Sponsors: Representatives Mena, Berry, Ramel, Low, Walen, Ryu, Timmons, Reed, Cheney, Nance, Cortes, Santos and Hackney.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of International Relations and Protocol (OIRP) to create a strategic plan, updated at regular intervals, to guide the state's international engagement and economic development.
- Modifies the duties of the OIRP, especially with respect to establishing government-to-government relationships, coordinating protocol for receiving foreign dignitaries, and creating an intergovernmental exchange with British Columbia.
- Expands the authority of the OIRP to create advisory committees to execute its responsibilities, including an International Engagement Advisory Committee.
- Creates an interparliamentary exchange between the legislatures of Washington and British Columbia.
- Increases membership of the Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations from 12 to 16 legislators.
- Removes the prohibition on reimbursing travel and lodging expenses from the Legislative International Trade Account.

Hearing Date: 1/10/24

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

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Background:

The Office of International Relations and Protocol.

In 1991 the state established the Office of International Relations and Protocol (OIRP) to function as the state's official liaison and protocol office with foreign governments. Prior to 1991, many of these responsibilities were undertaken by the Department of Trade and Economic Development. The OIRP also provides leadership in state government with respect to establishing and coordinating Washington's policies and relationships with foreign governments. The OIRP is housed in the Governor's office and the Governor appoints its director; the director may hire personnel as necessary. The OIRP may create temporary advisory committees as necessary to deal with specific international issues. The OIRP is one of several agencies that aids the Department of Commerce in identifying up to 15 countries of strategic importance to Washington's international trade relations.

Grants or gifts may be accepted to defray the cost of hosting foreign dignitaries.

The Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations.

In 1985 the state established the Legislative Committee on Economic Development to keep the Legislature involved in state economic development. Its jurisdiction was modified in 2003 to include international relations, and it became the Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations (LCEDIR). The LCEDIR consists of six senators and six representatives, with the Lieutenant Governor serving as chair. No more than three members from each chamber of the Legislature can be from the same political party.

The LCEDIR is authorized to study and review economic development issues with special emphasis on international trade, tourism, investment, and industrial development; and to assist the Legislature in developing a comprehensive and consistent economic development policy. For example, the LCEDIR may evaluate existing state policies, laws, and programs that promote or affect economic development to determine their cost-effectiveness, and it may monitor economic trends and develop state responses for the Legislature to review. The LCEDIR is required to cooperate, act, and function with legislative committees, executive agencies, similar councils or committees of other states, and interstate research organizations.

International Relations Expenditures.

A Legislative International Trade Account (Account) exists in the custody of the State Treasurer. Nonpublic gifts, grants, and endowments received by the Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State for the purposes of international trade hosting, international relations, and international missions activities must be deposited in the Account. Contributions to the Account are limited to \$5,000 per person or entity per year. The Account is nonappropriated, and expenditures may be used only for the purposes of international trade hosting, international relations, and international trade mission activities in which the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of State, and legislators participate in an official capacity. Expenditures

may not be used for travel and lodging.

Expenses incurred by the LCEDIR must be paid using voucher forms as provided by the state auditor's office and signed by LCEDIR leadership. Vouchers may be drawn from funds appropriated generally by the Legislature for legislative expenses or from any special appropriation that may be provided by the Legislature for the expenses of the committee.

Summary of Bill:

Changes to the Office of International Relations and Protocol.

The OIRP is required to create a strategic plan to guide the state's international engagement and economic development. The strategic plan must create a common framework for the state's engagement activities, including specific topics. The OIRP may consult with relevant entities and utilize existing resources when creating the strategic plan. The initial plan is due on July 1, 2025, and it must be reviewed at least every 2.5 years and fully updated at least every 5 years.

The duties of the OIRP are modified, especially with respect to establishing government-to-government relationships, coordinating protocol for receiving foreign dignitaries, and creating an intergovernmental exchange with British Columbia. Advisory committees created to execute the OIRP's responsibilities are no longer required to be temporary or limited to specific international issues, and an International Engagement Advisory Committee must be created. The primary responsibility for determining up to 15 foreign jurisdictions of strategic importance is transferred to the OIRP, to be done in consultation with other agencies, and criteria are established to guide the OIRP in making such designations.

Creation of an Interparliamentary Exchange with British Columbia.

An interparliamentary exchange between the legislatures of Washington and British Columbia is created in order to facilitate legislator-to-legislator communication between the two governments. The state's representative for the group is the chair of the LCEDIR.

Changes to the Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Trade.

The LCEDIR's membership is expanded to eight senators and eight representatives, with no more than four from each chamber being of the same political party. The list of entities with which the LCEDIR must cooperate is expanded to include similar councils or committees of provinces and territories of Canada. The process for LCEDIR members to be reimbursed via vouchers drawn on legislatively appropriated funds is repealed.

Changes to the Legislative International Trade Account.

The prohibition on reimbursing travel and lodging expenses from the Account is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.