

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1997

As of February 19, 2024

Title: An act relating to gubernatorial appointments for the state parks and recreation commission.

Brief Description: Concerning gubernatorial appointments for the state parks and recreation commission.

Sponsors: House Committee on Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans (originally sponsored by Representatives Ryu, Leavitt, Reed, Kloba, Reeves, Pollet and Davis; by request of Parks and Recreation Commission).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/9/24, 95-2.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/19/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that the Governor strive to appoint citizens to the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) who represent the diversity of Washington and who are from different regions of the state.
- Provides that the members of the Commission should include a variety of citizens with different gender, ethnic, racial, tribal backgrounds, including lived experiences.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: In 1913, the Legislature created the Washington State Board of Park Commissioners (Board) and in 1915, the Board accepted the first two donated park properties. The Legislature renamed the Board and gave the State Parks Committee the

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authority to acquire land for park purposes, adopt and enforce regulations for parks, and improve and beautify parks and parkways in 1921. The Legislature restructured the State Parks Committee into the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) in 1947. The number of state parks increased from 79 properties in 1950 to 130 properties by 1960. In 1969, the Legislature further restructured the Commission, making it an all-citizen board. The State Parks system now comprises approximately 144,400 acres, with more than 171 developed and undeveloped state park lands, including 19 marine parks, and more than 50 state park heritage sites and 400 miles of recreation trails.

The Commission consists of seven members, all appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate. Members of the Commission serve six-year terms. When making Commission appointments, the Governor is required to choose individuals who understand parks and recreation needs and interests. The Commission has broad authority over the management of state parks, including the power to grant concessions and leases in state parks.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Striking Amendment): In making the appointments to the Commission, the Governor should strive to choose citizens who are representative of the diversity of Washington, who understand park and recreation needs and interests, and who are from different regions of the state. The members of the Commission should include a variety of citizens with different gender, ethnic, racial, and tribal backgrounds, including citizens with other lived experiences.

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 On Proposed Striking Amendment:
PRO: Leadership of outdoor recreation opportunities, especially at State Parks, needs to be much more diverse. This bill formalizes the practice of having very diverse representation on the Commission. This bill provides additional direction to the Governor that, when making appointments to the Commission, citizens should come from different areas of the state and represent a variety of lived experiences and that reflect the diversity of Washington. The Commission believes a diversity of lived experiences strengthens decision-making as well as helping citizens see themselves in the Commission.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Cindy Ryu, Prime Sponsor; Owen Rowe,

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

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