
State Government & Tribal Relations Committee

SB 6313

Brief Description: Creating the capitol centennial stewardship account and authorizing members of the legislature and statewide elected officials to solicit gifts, grants, and donations to the account.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Wilson, J. and Nobles.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Capitol Centennial Stewardship Account, to be used for remodeling and repairs to the state capitol public facilities, interpretive and educational activities, and improvements to activities to enhance public participation in state government.
- Authorizes statewide elected officials, including members of the Legislature, to solicit gifts, grants, or donations to the account.

Hearing Date: 2/24/26

Staff: Connor Schiff (786-7093).

Background:

Washington State Capitol Campus and the Legislative Building.

The Washington State Capitol Campus, set on 143 acres, is home to the Legislative Building, five parks, three gardens, 25 office buildings, 18 monuments and artworks, and the 260-acre Capitol Lake-Deschutes Estuary.

In 1893 the Legislature formed the State Capitol Commission to oversee the creation of a new

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capitol building in Olympia. Four years later, Washington purchased Thurston County Courthouse to serve as the new state capitol building. In 1911, the State Capitol Commission held an architectural competition for a new capitol building amid growth of the Washington government. Construction of the new capitol building, which was designed by New York architects Walter Wilder and Harry White, began in 1922. The new capitol building, named the Legislative Building, was completed in 1928. The Legislative Building is one of the tallest masonry-dome buildings in the world and the tallest in North America, at 287-feet high.

Capitol Public and Historic Facilities.

Certain properties are identified as "state capitol public and historic facilities." These properties include:

- the east, west, and north capitol campus grounds, Sylvester Park, Heritage Park, Marathon Park, Centennial Park, the Deschutes River Basin (commonly known as Capitol Lake), the interpretive center, Deschutes Parkway, and the landscape, memorials, artwork, fountains, streets, sidewalks, lighting, and infrastructure in each of these areas;
- the public spaces and the historic interior and exterior elements of the following buildings: the visitor center, the Governor's mansion, the Legislative Building, the John L. O'Brien Building, the Cherberg Building, the Newhouse Building, the Pritchard Building, the Temple of Justice, the Insurance Building, the Dolliver Building, the Capitol Court Building, and the old capitol buildings, including the historic state-owned furnishings and works of art commissioned for or original to these buildings; and
- other facilities as determined by the State Capitol Committee, in consultation with the Department of Enterprise Services.

Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee Account.

Funds in the Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee Account, which is established in the custody of the State Treasurer, may be used to finance the activities of the Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee (Committee). The Committee is established to:

- promote and encourage the recovery and preservation of the original and historic furnishings of the state capitol group;
- prevent future loss of historic furnishings; and
- review and advise future remodeling and restoration projects as they pertain to historic furnishings.

The Committee may engage in fund-raising activities, including soliciting charitable gifts, grants, or donations specifically for the limited purpose of the recovery of the original and historic furnishings.

"State capitol group" includes the Legislative Building, the Insurance Building, the Cherberg Building, the John L. O'Brien building, the Newhouse Building, the Pritchard Building, and the Temple of Justice.

Ethics in Public Service.

The Ethics in Public Service laws prohibit state officers and state employees from using their

public employment for personal gain or private advantage, or creating the appearance of such impropriety. These laws include provisions that govern the extent to which state officers and state employees may ask for money or gifts. For example, state officers or employees may not accept or solicit anything of economic value as a gift if it could be reasonably expected that the gift would influence their vote, action, or judgment. State officers or employees also may not ask for or receive any gift from a source for omitting or deferring the performance of any official duty. Several commissions and categories of employees have been given explicit permission to solicit gifts, grants, or donations without running afoul of any ethics laws. These exemptions include: the Conservation Commission; the Office of Equity; Secretary of State designees who solicit and accept contributions to the Washington State Flag Account; legislative employees who solicit contributions to the Gina Grant Bull Memorial Legislative Page Scholarship Account; and any state employees who solicit gifts for the purpose of expanding tourism.

Time Limit for State Officials to Solicit or Accept Contributions.

Beginning 30 days before a regular legislative session convenes and continuing through the date of final adjournment, state officials, and individuals employed by or acting on behalf of a state official or legislator, are prohibited from soliciting or accepting contributions to a public office fund, a candidate or authorized committee, or to retire a campaign debt. There is an exception for the Washington State legacy project, which authorizes the Secretary of State to solicit and accept gifts, grants, conveyances, bequests, and devises of real or personal property.

Summary of Bill:

The Capitol Centennial Stewardship Account (Account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. Funds in the Account may only be used after appropriation and for the following uses:

- remodeling and repairs to "state capitol public and historic facilities";
- interpretive and educational activities; and
- improvements and activities to enhance public participation in state government.

Members of the Legislature and statewide elected officials are authorized to solicit gifts, grants, and donations from public and private sources for the Account until June 30, 2033. When soliciting gifts, grants, or donations to the account, statewide elected officials and members of the Legislature are presumed not to be in violation of the solicitation and receipt of gift provisions of the Ethics Act. Any funds remaining in the account on July 1st, 2033, must be transferred to the Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee Account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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