
SENATE BILL 5812

State of Washington

62nd Legislature

2011 Regular Session

By Senators Chase and Prentice

Read first time 02/16/11. Referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

1 AN ACT Relating to studying Washington's fiscal resources,
2 structure, and needs; creating new sections; and providing an
3 expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that Washington has a
6 unique tax structure that relies heavily on property and sales taxes to
7 fund a host of services for its citizens. Education, health care,
8 transportation projects, the criminal justice system, state parks, and
9 social programs are paid for by state taxes. Tedious and complicated,
10 many citizens do not fully understand how the budget process works, how
11 all moneys are raised, and why there never seems to be enough revenue.
12 The legislature finds that creating opportunities for citizens to
13 participate in the process can counter negative public perceptions
14 about the budget process. Therefore, it is the intent of the
15 legislature to establish a committee, made up of ordinary citizens, to
16 study the state's fiscal resources, structure, and needs.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The Washington state institute for
18 public policy must facilitate and staff a group of Washington citizens

1 to become the committee on Washington's finances. The committee must
2 consist of citizens of the state. The institute must devise,
3 publicize, and implement an application program so that ordinary
4 citizens may apply to be members of the committee. No later than July
5 30, 2011, the institute must select the members of the committee from
6 the applicants. In selecting members, the institute must use diversity
7 of geographic, work, education, and civic participation to balance the
8 committee. An elected official may not be a member of the committee.
9 The institute must strive to appoint citizens who are not closely
10 connected with the political process, but instead are active or
11 interested in their communities. Staff of the office of financial
12 management, the department or revenue, the house of representatives,
13 and the senate must assist the committee as the committee deems
14 desirable.

15 (2) The members of the committee must elect a chair. Members of
16 the committee must serve without compensation, but must be reimbursed
17 for travel expenses under RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

18 (3) The committee must hold meetings in at least four areas outside
19 the central Puget Sound region to receive information and feedback from
20 Washington's citizens. These meetings must be facilitated by the
21 Washington state institute for public policy.

22 (4) The purpose of the study is to determine the best ways to
23 identify and fund the necessary services for Washington's citizens.
24 The committee must study at a minimum the following:

25 (a) The latest biennial budget passed by the legislature;

26 (b) The Washington state tax structure; and

27 (c) Identifying items in the budget that should not be funded, as
28 well as identifying items that should have been included in the budget.
29 In identifying the items that should or should not be in the budget
30 under this subsection (4)(c), the committee must identify the
31 appropriate tax increases or tax decreases that would coincide with the
32 budget changes identified.

33 (5) The committee must present a final report of the findings of
34 the study and the alternatives developed by the committee to the ways
35 and means committee in the senate and the finance committee in the
36 house of representatives by November 30, 2012. Additionally, the
37 findings of the study must be announced to the public via press release

1 and the findings must be made available to the public via the internet.

2 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act expires November 30, 2012.

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