

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5535

As of February 22, 2007

Title: An act relating to school district board of directors.

Brief Description: Concerning school district board of directors.

Sponsors: Senators Murray, Jacobsen and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/22/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Eric Bratton (786-7438)

Background: The registered voters of a school district elect each member of a school district board of directors for four-year terms. The terms are staggered and, insofar as possible, not more than a majority of one board is elected to full terms at any regular election. A first class school district having within its boundaries a city with more than 400,000 people have a board of directors of seven members. All other school districts have school boards that consist of five members.

If authorized by the board, each member of the board of directors of a school district may receive compensation of \$50 per day, or portion thereof, for attending board meetings and for performing other services on behalf of the school district. Board member compensation may only come from locally collected excess levy funds available for that purpose. The compensation provided in this section must be in addition to any reimbursement for expenses paid to such directors by the school district.

To the extent funds are appropriated, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in cooperation with the Educational Service Districts and the Washington State School Directors' Association, is responsible for conducting an annual training meeting for local school district boards of directors.

Summary of Bill: The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) will conduct a broad performance audit of school boards in Washington, analyzing the roles, responsibilities, costs, and compensation of the school boards, along with their efficiency and effectiveness. JLARC may use performance measures or standards used by other states or school districts in developing its findings. It must report its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 2008.

The Office of School Director Training and Instruction (OSDTI) is established within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The purpose of OSDTI is to develop and

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provide the initial core training program for first-time school board directors and also provide annual ongoing professional development, training, and instruction for school directors. The office will work collaboratively with the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) in developing the content of the courses, and may contract with WSSDA, or other providers, to provide the courses. The initial core training for first-time directors must consist of 14 hours and must be obtained within the first two years of serving on the board. After the initial core training has been obtained, each school district director must annually take a minimum of seven hours of professional development, training, or instruction courses. Hours obtained in excess of the minimum requirements each year may accumulate and be carried forward from year to year. A statement of each school director's hours taken in the preceding year must be included on the school district and OSDTI's websites.

Voters may elect to change the structure of a school district board of directors from an elected board to an appointed board, or back to an elected board, by petition and vote in a general election. A petition signed by at least 10 percent of the registered voters in the school district must be submitted to the county auditor at least 60 days prior to the next general election. The petition must designate who will appoint the school district board of directors. The size of the appointed board and the terms of the appointed directors may not be changed. A certified ballot proposition authorizing the change in the structure of the school board will be submitted to the voters in the school district at the next district general election. If the ballot proposition is approved by a simple majority vote of the registered voters within the school district, then the change in the structure of the board will take effect January 1 of the following year.

School board compensation, if authorized by the school board, will be equal to the regular federal per diem rate, with 50 percent of the cost covered by the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill is about giving citizens an option whether to have an appointed school board, an elected school board, or a combination. The bill offers assistance to school boards to acquire skills needed for a twenty-first century system. This bill presents an option. Give people on the local level the option to change how school boards are governed. In elected school boards, the average tenure of superintendent is three years. In appointed boards, the average tenure is five to seven years. We need stability.

CON: Local boards are elected by community and represent the cornerstone of support for local districts. If that support is lost, then there can be long-term ramifications. Allowing options will create disruptions. We like the idea of training, but not mandating training. School districts are already scheduled for audits and it was presumed what is called for in those audits would eliminate the need for a JLARC study. Boards are accountable to the voters. Appointed boards are not. Professional development should be the responsibility of each individual board member. Locally elected school boards work. Citizens should be able to choose the elected officials that have a direct impact on their children's lives. Appointed boards could lead to the privatization of education. Training should include cultural

competency. The Legislature doesn't have the right to require another elected body to receive training.

OTHER: The training component of the bill is positive, but the changes made to issues of governance is very alarming.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Murray, prime sponsor; Charles Rolland, Community and Parents for Public Schools; Ben Kodama, Equitable Opportunity Caucus.

CON: Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Martha Rice, Yakima School Board; Bill Williams, North Thurston School District; Lisa Stuebing, citizen; Catherine Ahl, League of Women Voters; Clifford Traisman, Seattle Public Schools; Cheryl Chow, Seattle School Board; Cindy McMullen, Central Valley School Board; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.

OTHER: George Scarola, League of Education Voters.