AN ACT Relating to waivers from the one hundred eighty-day school year; amending RCW 28A.655.180; adding a new section to chapter 28A.305 RCW; creating a new section; repealing RCW 28A.305.145; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that school districts are seeking innovations to reduce operating costs and preserve limited resources for the primary purpose of student learning. Efficiencies in transportation, heat, lights, maintenance, and food expenses are possible from operating for four rather than five days per week, but current law poses a barrier to this innovation by requiring a set number of instructional days in each school year. Current waiver processes do not allow consideration of economies and efficiencies as a justification for a waiver. School districts in several western states have operated on a four-day school week and report increased efficiencies, family support, reduced absenteeism, and no negative impact on student learning. Small rural school districts in particular could benefit due to their high per-pupil costs for transportation and utilities. Therefore, the legislature intends to permit school
districts to seek waivers from the school year requirement in order to operate on a four-day school week, provided that adequate safeguards are put in place to prevent any negative impact on student learning.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 28A.305 RCW to read as follows:

(1) In addition to waivers authorized under RCW 28A.305.140 and 28A.655.180, the state board of education may grant waivers from the requirement for a one hundred eighty-day school year under RCW 28A.150.220 and 28A.150.250 to school districts that propose to operate one or more schools on a four-day school week for purposes of economy and efficiency as provided in this section. The requirement under RCW 28A.150.220 that school districts offer an annual average instructional hour offering of at least one thousand hours shall not be waived.

(2) A school district seeking a waiver under this section must submit an application that includes:

(a) A proposed calendar for the school day and school year that demonstrates how the instructional hour requirement will be maintained;

(b) An explanation and estimate of the economies and efficiencies to be gained from compressing the instructional hours into fewer than one hundred eighty days;

(c) An explanation of how monetary savings from the proposal will be redirected to support student learning;

(d) A summary of comments received at one or more public hearings on the proposal and how concerns will be addressed;

(e) Other information that the state board of education may request to assure that the proposed four-day school week will not adversely affect student learning.

(3) The state board of education shall adopt criteria to evaluate waiver requests. Waivers may be granted for up to three years, and districts may reapply to extend the waiver for an additional period. However, all waivers expire August 31, 2015.

(4) The state board shall examine the waivers granted under this section and make a recommendation to the education committees of the legislature by December 15, 2014, regarding whether the waiver program should be continued, modified, or allowed to terminate.

(5) This section expires August 31, 2015.
Sec. 3. RCW 28A.655.180 and 1995 c 208 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The state board of education, where appropriate, or the superintendent of public instruction, where appropriate, may grant waivers to districts from the provisions of statutes or rules relating to: The length of the school year; student-to-teacher ratios; and other administrative rules that in the opinion of the state board of education or the opinion of the superintendent of public instruction may need to be waived in order for a district to implement a plan for restructuring its educational program or the educational program of individual schools within the district.

(2) School districts may use the application process in RCW 28A.305.140 (or 28A.300.138) to apply for the waivers under (subsection (1) of) this section.

((3) The joint select committee on education restructuring shall study which waivers of state laws or rules are necessary for school districts to implement education restructuring. The committee shall study whether the waivers are used to implement specific essential academic learning requirements and student learning goals. The committee shall study the availability of waivers under the programs for the twenty-first century program created by chapter 525, Laws of 1987, and the use of those waivers by schools participating in that program. The committee shall also study the use of waivers authorized under RCW 28A.305.140. The committee shall report its findings to the legislature by December 1, 1997.))

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. RCW 28A.305.145 (Application process for waivers under RCW 28A.305.140) and 1993 c 336 s 302 are each repealed.

--- END ---