

History of Washington State Legislative Council Activities Given

Association of Washington Industries News

The Washington State Legislative Council was created by a 1947 law (RCW 44.24.010.070) some fourteen years after the establishment of the first Legislative Council in Kansas.

It consists of 21 members, including the President Pro-Tem of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, with the President appointing the remaining nine Senators and the Speaker appointing the remaining ten Representatives.

The membership must include at least one individual from each congressional district, and no more than twelve of the Council members can be members of any one political party.

Senate members are confirmed by the Senate, and House members by the House of Representatives. If appointments are not timely made, members are elected by the respective Houses.

The vacancies of Senate members are filled by appointment by the remaining Senate members, and the same procedure is followed by House members. Vacancies must be filled from the same political party as that of the member whose seat was vacated.

The term of office of all members is from the time of confirmation or election until their successors have been confirmed or elected, or until they cease to be members of the Legislature.

The Council's powers and duties include: (1) Interim Studies. To perform through the council as a whole, or through subcommittees, duties and func-

tions customarily delegated to special interim legislative committees; (2) Improve State Government. To study administrative organization and procedure of all agencies of state government and to recommend improvements.

(3) Hearings. To make other studies of state government and to hear complaints, hold hearings, gather information, make findings of fact. Prior approval of two-thirds of the membership is required to authorize public hearings.

(4) Legislative Matters. To attend generally to business addressed to, or affecting the Legislature during the interim between regular sessions.

(5) Reports. To make periodic reports to members of the Legislature and a biennial report ten days prior to each regular session.

(6) Interstate Cooperation. To cooperate and function with similar Councils in other states and the Council of State Governments.

The executive committee serves as administrative body for the Council, and in addition occasionally undertakes research assignments. It is composed of the chairman, vice chairman and secretary of the Legislative Council.

The Council operates through subcommittees numbering, during the last few years, approximately twelve. They parallel the major standing committees of the sessions.

It ordinarily has a permanent research and clerical staff which prepares materials and reports for the Council and its subcommittees and places all

recommendations in actual bill form for introduction in the Legislature.

The Council frequently utilizes other members of the Legislature as special committee members and has, on occasion, established large advisory committees representing various organizations in the state to assist in its major projects.

Regular meetings are held at least every three months and subcommittee and other meetings number in the hundreds during a biennium.

As in the other 41 states which now have Legislative Councils, it is recognized that a 60-day session, once every two years, is inadequate for the scope and complexity of present state government, the Legislative Council, which has continuity and time to study and appraise major problems, is one method of assisting the Legislature.

In addition to the long-range development of proposed legislation, the members and ex-officio members of the Council become well informed on matters of public assistance, education, natural resources and other areas in which they work.

Although, as previously stated, the Council was established in 1947, it did not have a professional career staff until 1953. During this time the Council has:

1. Carried on continuous research on taxation, institutions, public welfare, natural resources, commerce and industry, agriculture, education, local government, etc.

2. Functioned as Commission on Interstate Cooperation and as

contact point for Council of State Governments, other states, public agencies; receiving, in return, reciprocal service.

3. Drafted legislation designed to improve state and local government and to implement request from reputable agencies and organizations; served as objective information, source to news media, the public and state officials;

4. Published numerous factual reports on assessment, junior colleges, judiciary, taxation, water resources, re-apportionment and scores of other subjects;

5. Assisted in orientation courses for new legislators, provided individual research assistance to all legislators, both during sessions and in the interim, and staff assistance to standing committees and helped to develop expert knowledge on the part of legislators on the Council.

As previously reported, Governor Rosellini vetoed the \$177,741 appropriation made directly to the Council by the 1963 Legislature to cover its expenses between sessions of the Legislature.

Prior to the veto the Council had an experienced staff composed of from 6 to 7 members. After the veto the Council decided to maintain its program with a limited staff and pay its expenses out of an appropriation made for the House of Representatives. The staff was then cut to three persons.

On June 27, 1963, Attorney General John J. O'Connell approved this financial arrangement by the Council, but on December 17, 1963, he reversed his opinion contending that the wording of the Supreme Court decision which upheld the Governor's veto, cast a doubt on his original opinion. As a result, the Legislative Council was deprived of the balance of its staff.

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It All Has a Purpose



DONALD C. SAMPSON, Executive Secretary of the Legislative Council, points out some of the background material necessary to the Council's work. Sampson says that the information in the Council's affairs is the most up-to-date material to be found anywhere. The large box behind Sampson contains material necessary for a study on the various retirement systems.

State Employee, March 1962