
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5523

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Riccelli, Lovelett, Slatter, Nobles, Kauffman, Warnick, Trudeau, Hasegawa, Saldaña, Valdez, Wellman, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/18/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to the role of students on the governing boards
2 of institutions of higher education; amending RCW 28B.50.100 and
3 28B.50.102; adding a new section to chapter 28B.50 RCW; adding a new
4 section to chapter 28B.35 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.20
5 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.30 RCW; adding a new section
6 to chapter 28B.40 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that decisions made
9 by governing boards of each respective institution of higher
10 education greatly impact the lives of students and that student
11 participation in the decision-making process can provide insight into
12 the impacts of actions by trustees that are not always measurable
13 through reports and statistics. Students are on campus every day
14 using services and experiencing aspects of the institution that board
15 members may only see on paper, providing a unique and valuable
16 perspective that should not be overlooked.

17 Students serving on governing boards of institutions of higher
18 education have proven effective in Washington and in over 30 other
19 states. For nearly 30 years, students at Washington's four-year
20 institutions of higher education have served as voting members on the
21 board of trustees and regents. Students also serve with voting rights

1 on both the Washington student achievement council and the workforce
2 education investment accountability and oversight board. These
3 opportunities have provided greater depth in board deliberations and
4 a well-educated conduit for students to voice ideas and concerns.

5 The student perspective at community colleges also brings the
6 board closer to their community. Student populations at community
7 colleges are the most diverse of any institution of higher education
8 in the state. Being on campus and in class every day, students are
9 exposed to a more diverse group than any member of the board
10 representing any one group of the community. Student positions on
11 governing boards are also a valuable tool for developing leadership
12 through experiential learning. Student members learn processes of
13 institutional governance, become involved in campus projects, analyze
14 policy proposals, and participate in board discussions and decision
15 making. While some student leaders are given the opportunity to
16 report directly to the board, this is vastly different from having a
17 right to discussion and the opportunity to vote on matters important
18 to the student body.

19 It is the intent of the legislature to enhance community college
20 governance by fostering a more dynamic relationship between students
21 and institutions through the encouragement of student participation
22 in policy development and decision making at the district and state
23 level.

24 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.50.100 and 2013 c 23 s 58 are each amended to
25 read as follows:

26 (1) There is hereby created a board of trustees for each college
27 district as set forth in this chapter. Each board of trustees shall
28 be composed of ~~((five))~~ six trustees, ~~((except as provided in))~~
29 including a student trustee pursuant to RCW 28B.50.102, who shall be
30 appointed by the governor for terms commencing October 1st of the
31 year in which appointed. In making such appointments, the governor
32 shall give consideration to geographical diversity, and representing
33 labor, business, women, and racial and ethnic minorities, in the
34 membership of the boards of trustees. The boards of trustees for
35 districts containing technical colleges shall include at least one
36 member from business and one member from labor.

37 (2) The successors of the trustees initially appointed shall be
38 appointed by the governor to serve for a term of five years except
39 that any person appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the

1 expiration of any term shall be appointed only for the remainder of
2 the term. Each member shall serve until a successor is appointed and
3 qualified.

4 (3) Every trustee, except the student trustee, shall be a
5 resident and qualified elector of the college district. No trustee
6 may be an employee of the community and technical college system, a
7 member of the board of directors of any school district, or a member
8 of the governing board of any public or private educational
9 institution.

10 (4) Each board of trustees shall organize itself by electing a
11 chair from its members. The board shall adopt a seal and may adopt
12 such bylaws, rules, and regulations as it deems necessary for its own
13 government. ((Three members of the board)) A majority of appointed
14 trustees currently serving shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser
15 number may adjourn from time to time and may compel the attendance of
16 absent members in such manner as prescribed in its bylaws, rules, or
17 regulations. The district president, or if there be none, the
18 president of the college, shall serve as, or may designate another
19 person to serve as, the secretary of the board, who shall not be
20 deemed to be a member of the board.

21 (5) Each board of trustees shall follow procedures for open
22 public meetings in chapter 42.30 RCW. Each board shall provide time
23 for public comment at each meeting.

24 (6) Members of the boards of trustees may be removed for
25 misconduct or malfeasance in office in the manner provided by RCW
26 28B.10.500.

27 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28B.50.102 and 2012 c 148 s 3 are each amended to
28 read as follows:

29 (1) Boards of trustees for each college district(~~((, by majority~~
30 ~~vote, may))~~ shall establish a sixth trustee that shall be filled by a
31 student. The governor shall select each student member from a list of
32 candidates, of at least three and not more than five, submitted by
33 the associated student governments or their equivalent of the college
34 district. The nomination process must include a representative from
35 the college administration, who will participate in an advisory
36 capacity to ensure transparency and collaboration in the selection
37 process. This representative may provide input, but may not interfere
38 with the associated student government's selection of candidates. The
39 student member shall hold his or her office for a term of one year,

beginning July ~~((1st))~~ 1, 2026, and every July 1st thereafter, and
ending June 30th, or until the student member's successor is
appointed and qualified, whichever is later. The student member must
be at least 18 years of age at the time of appointment. The student
member shall be a ~~((full-time student in good standing at a college~~
~~within the college district at the time of appointment and throughout~~
~~the student's term. If the student member fails to be enrolled at the~~
~~college full-time))~~ student in good standing who is enrolled for at
least 10 credits or the equivalent at a community or technical
college at the time of appointment and throughout the student's term,
not including summer quarter. If the student member fails to be
enrolled at the college for a minimum of 10 credits or the equivalent
during his or her term, other than during summer quarter, or forfeits
his or her academic standing, the student member is disqualified and
a new student member must be appointed.

(2) State funding may not be used for student trustees to travel
to meetings other than those that have been regularly scheduled by
the college board. Student trustees may receive funds from student
and activities fees, local college funds, or private sources for
travel to meetings other than those that have been regularly
scheduled by the college board.

(3) A student appointed under this section shall excuse himself
or herself from participation or voting on issues pertaining to
pending litigation and matters relating to the hiring, discipline, or
tenure of faculty members and personnel or any other matters
pertaining to collective bargaining agreements.

(4) The college board may adopt rules to implement this section.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
RCW to read as follows:

A student representative from each of the associated student
governments or their equivalent from each college district shall be
given an opportunity to provide an in-person report at each regular
board of trustees meeting.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 28B.35
RCW to read as follows:

A student government representative shall be given an opportunity
to provide an in-person report at each regular board of trustees
meeting.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.20
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 A student representative from each undergraduate student
4 government at each of the institution's campuses and a student
5 representative from each graduate student government at each of the
6 institution's campuses shall be given an opportunity to provide an
7 in-person report at each regular board of regents meeting.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.30
9 RCW to read as follows:

10 A student representative from each undergraduate student
11 government at each of the institution's campuses and a student
12 representative from each graduate student government at each of the
13 institution's campuses shall be given an opportunity to provide an
14 in-person report at each regular board of regents meeting.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.40
16 RCW to read as follows:

17 A student government representative shall be given an opportunity
18 to provide an in-person report at each regular board of trustees
19 meeting.

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