
HOUSE BILL 1324

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Representatives McEntire and Young

1 AN ACT Relating to increasing legislative transparency; adding
2 new sections to chapter 44.04 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that public input
5 into the legislative process is necessary for a republican form of
6 government. Public input fosters the people's trust by keeping
7 government actors accountable and minimizing the unintended
8 consequences that can occur when interested parties are not provided
9 sufficient opportunity to comment on pending legislation. Often,
10 however, proposed substitute bills, striking amendments, and
11 conference committee reports make broad changes to legislation, and
12 the public is either not given the opportunity to comment or not
13 given the time necessary for robust evaluation. To address this
14 concern, the legislature intends to require a minimum amount of
15 notice before holding a public hearing on a new bill or voting on a
16 proposed substitute, striking amendment, or conference committee
17 report.

18 Additionally, the legislature finds that bills containing only
19 titles or intent statements contribute to a culture of opacity that
20 undercuts the public trust. The public and members of the legislature
21 need to be afforded the opportunity to fully evaluate legislation,

1 but title-only or intent-only bills offer no content to evaluate. The
2 public instead must wait for the legislature to decide what content
3 to include in the bill, which often occurs when it is too late for
4 public comment. Further, the legislature finds that title-only and
5 intent-only bills do not adequately lay out the scope and object of a
6 bill, thereby undercutting the premise of Article II, section 38 of
7 the state Constitution. Accordingly, the legislature intends to
8 increase transparency by ending the practice of introducing or
9 amending bills that contain only titles or intent statements.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 44.04
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 (1) A standing committee of the legislature may not hold a public
13 hearing on a bill unless the bill was publicly introduced in the
14 legislature at least 72 hours before the public hearing. A bill may
15 not be voted on by a standing committee or by either the senate or
16 the house of representatives unless it has been the subject of a
17 public hearing in a regular or special session during the same
18 calendar year.

19 (2) A standing committee must provide at least 72 hours' notice
20 of a public hearing. The notice must include the date, time, and
21 place of the hearing and the title and number of each bill to be
22 heard. This subsection does not preclude a standing committee or a
23 chamber of the legislature from adopting rules that require more than
24 72 hours' notice.

25 (3) (a) A proposed substitute or striking amendment must be made
26 publicly available at least 72 hours before it may be voted on by a
27 standing committee or by either the senate or the house of
28 representatives.

29 (b) A conference committee report must be made publicly available
30 at least 72 hours before it may be voted on by either the senate or
31 the house of representatives.

32 (4) A bill may not be voted on by the senate or the house of
33 representatives until 24 hours after it has been placed on the second
34 reading calendar.

35 (5) (a) The requirements in this section may be waived by a two-
36 thirds majority vote of the chamber in which the bill is pending.

37 (b) For a bill pending in a standing committee, the requirement
38 in subsection (3) (a) of this section may be waived by a two-thirds
39 majority vote of the standing committee in which the bill is pending.

1 (c) A vote to waive any requirement in this section must be a
2 recorded roll call vote.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 44.04
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) A title-only bill or a bill that contains only an intent
6 section may not be introduced in either the house of representatives
7 or the senate.

8 (2) A standing committee may not recommend passage of a bill
9 that, as introduced or as amended or substituted, is a title-only
10 bill or contains only an intent section.

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