
SENATE BILL 5546

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senator Orwall

1 AN ACT Relating to requiring the installation of solar energy
2 systems on new school buildings; adding new sections to chapter
3 28A.525 RCW; creating a new section; providing an effective date; and
4 declaring an emergency.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that expanding the
7 use of solar energy is an effective means of reducing greenhouse gas
8 emissions and the state's reliance on the fossil fuels responsible
9 for our rapidly changing climate. The legislature further finds that
10 the use of solar energy to power buildings is generally a cost-
11 effective means of reducing energy bills with a return on investment
12 that may equal or exceed the initial cost. The legislature also notes
13 that the state's building code requires solar readiness for many
14 buildings and that the state's energy performance standard, commonly
15 known as the clean buildings act, is transitioning the state toward
16 ever more energy efficient buildings. Considering these benefits and
17 existing state requirements, the legislature intends to create a
18 requirement, subject to sufficient legislative appropriations, that
19 public schools install solar energy systems on new buildings that
20 exceed 50,000 square feet.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.525

2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1)(a) A public school that plans to commence construction of a
4 qualifying school building on or after June 1, 2028, shall notify the
5 office of the superintendent of public instruction prior to the
6 commencement of construction in order to address the feasibility of
7 installing a qualifying solar energy system.

8 (b) A public school that plans to commence construction of a
9 qualifying school building on or after June 1, 2025, but prior to
10 June 1, 2028, may provide notice to the superintendent of public
11 instruction pursuant to subsection (2) of this section for the
12 purpose of seeking a grant award under section 3 of this act.

13 (2) The notification required by subsection (1) of this section
14 must be provided within the time frame established by the
15 superintendent of public instruction and must include:

16 (a) The estimated cost of permitting, purchasing, and installing
17 a qualifying solar energy system for the planned building; and

18 (b) A comparison of the proposed qualifying solar energy system's
19 capacity to the school campus' anticipated electrical energy
20 consumption. In addition to existing electrical energy consumption,
21 the comparison must include the electrical energy consumption from
22 planned capital investments included in the school's 10-year capital
23 plans as well as from anticipated improvements required to comply
24 with the state's energy-related building standards in this chapter.

25 (3) To facilitate submission of the project notification required
26 under this section and to assess the public benefit potential of each
27 project, the superintendent of public instruction must:

28 (a) Provide technical assistance to public schools for estimating
29 costs and project scope;

30 (b) Perform a cost-benefit analysis for each project that
31 compares the state's investment to the value produced by the project
32 over a period of at least 25 years, including an estimate of whether
33 the project would result in a positive net present value over the
34 period of analysis.

35 (4) For purposes of this section, the following definitions
36 apply:

37 (a) "Commencement of construction" means the date that a building
38 permit is issued under the building code adopted under RCW 19.27.031
39 for construction of the school building.

1 (b) "Qualifying school building" means a building owned by a
2 public school that is required to provide solar zones pursuant to the
3 building code adopted under RCW 19.27.031 and is more than 50,000
4 gross square feet.

5 (c) "Qualifying solar energy systems" means photovoltaic panels
6 of a design, capacity, and quantity sufficient to maximize buildings'
7 or sites' solar energy generation potential, but not to exceed school
8 campus' anticipated electrical energy consumption.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.525
10 RCW to read as follows:

11 (1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
12 develop a grant program to reimburse public schools for the cost of
13 installing qualifying solar energy systems.

14 (2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
15 specific purpose, the superintendent of public instruction shall
16 award grants on a reimbursement basis for the actual cost of
17 installing qualifying solar energy systems. The superintendent of
18 public instruction may only award grants for projects that would
19 result in a positive net present value over the period of analysis.

20 (3)(a) Public schools that receive notification of a grant award
21 within the timeline established by the superintendent of public
22 instruction, and that commence construction on or after June 1, 2028,
23 must install qualifying solar energy systems prior to building
24 occupancy.

25 (b) Public schools that receive notification of a grant award,
26 and that commence construction prior to June 1, 2028, may install
27 qualifying solar energy systems after building occupancy at the
28 discretion of the superintendent of public instruction.

29 (4) Public schools must notify the office of the superintendent
30 of public instruction in accordance with section 2 of this act to be
31 eligible to receive funding.

32 (5) No later than September 30, 2026, and thereafter prior to
33 September 30th of each fiscal biennium, the superintendent of public
34 instruction shall request legislative appropriations in an amount
35 sufficient to fund the estimated cost of eligible grant awards.

36 (6) For purposes of this section, "qualifying solar energy
37 systems" has the same meaning as in section 2 of this act.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act is necessary for the immediate
2 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
3 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
4 effect July 1, 2025.

--- END ---