
SUBSTITUTE SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 8402

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2015 Regular Session

By Senate Government Operations & Security (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Roach, and Liias)

1 WHEREAS, An independent, creative, and competent legislature
2 distinguishes a democratic system from more authoritarian forms of
3 government; and

4 WHEREAS, Questions arise as to whether the Washington state
5 legislature is structurally, functionally, operationally, and
6 procedurally satisfactory for resolving today's complex and divisive
7 issues; and

8 WHEREAS, The time demands have expanded significantly for
9 legislators as a result of increasing numbers of constituents,
10 constituent and public access to legislators, and state operating,
11 capital, and transportation budgets; and

12 WHEREAS, A 2008 study of full-time and part-time legislators by
13 the national conference of state legislators found that part-time
14 legislators spend nearly as much time on the job as full-time
15 legislators despite a significant difference in both pay and number
16 of staff; and

17 WHEREAS, Legislators tend to regard their own legislature as
18 somehow incomparable, without regard to how the Washington state
19 legislature compares with other state legislatures;

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, By the Senate of the state of
21 Washington, the House of Representatives concurring, That the
22 Washington state commission on the evaluation of the legislature be

1 established within the legislature to evaluate the legislature's
2 decision-making capabilities based on the following categories:

3 Structure and Function (e.g., restrictions on frequency,
4 duration, length, and agendas of sessions, general purpose and size
5 of staff, facilities, provisions for management and coordination);

6 Accountability (e.g., explicit rules and procedures, adequacy of
7 information and public access to it, internal accountability);

8 Informedness (e.g., sufficient time, standing committees, interim
9 activities, professional staff resources, fiscal review
10 capabilities);

11 Independence (e.g., frequency and duration of sessions,
12 legislative independence from executive branch, capability for
13 effective oversight of executive operations, interest groups,
14 conflicts of interest); and

15 Representativeness (e.g., diversity and compensation); and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That:

17 (1) The commission consist of fifteen members appointed by the
18 legislature. Four members of the senate, two from each of the two
19 major political parties, appointed by the president of the senate,
20 and four members of the house of representatives, two from each of
21 the two major political parties, appointed by the speaker of the
22 house of representatives, shall serve as members. The legislative
23 members shall appoint seven citizen members, one of whom shall be the
24 chair. The legislative members shall consider nominations for citizen
25 membership based upon maintaining a balanced and diverse distribution
26 of philosophical perspectives on the proper roles of government,
27 society, and the individual;

28 (2) All commission members serve at the pleasure of the
29 legislature. The position of any legislative member shall be deemed
30 vacated whenever such member ceases to be a member of the house from
31 which he or she was appointed. Any vacancies occurring in the
32 membership of the commission shall be filled in the same manner as
33 the original appointments;

34 (3)(a) Nonlegislative members be reimbursed for expenses incurred
35 in the performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 43.03.050
36 and 43.03.060;

37 (b) Legislative members be reimbursed for expenses incurred in
38 the performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 44.04.120;

39 (4) A simple majority of the membership constitutes a quorum for
40 the purpose of conducting business;

1 (5) Staff support for the commission must be provided by senate
2 committee services and the house of representatives office of program
3 research;

4 (6) The expenses of the commission must be paid jointly by the
5 senate and the house of representatives. Commission expenditures are
6 subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee
7 and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their
8 successor committees; and

9 (7) In carrying out its duties, the commission may establish such
10 relationships with public and private institutions, local
11 governments, private industry, community organizations, other state
12 legislatures, and other segments of the general public as may be
13 needed to evaluate the Washington state legislature; and

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Washington state commission on
15 the evaluation of the legislature report to the legislature its
16 findings and recommendations by December 1, 2016; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the commission terminate December
18 31, 2016.

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