



---

# SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

---

**RANDY I. DORN** OLD CAPITOL BUILDING • PO BOX 47200 • OLYMPIA WA 98504-7200 • <http://www.k12.wa.us>

---

---

April 16, 2010

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire  
Governor of Washington  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

After reviewing ESSB 6444, I am requesting a veto regarding specific language within Section 501, Subsection (1) (b), an appropriation of \$250,000 set forth to create a new statewide school district reorganization commission. I have real concerns and reservations about this appropriation and the newly established commission for several reasons.

First, the membership and the process is in conflict with existing statutes associated with school district organization and reorganization. The budget bill creates a commission that has overlapping powers and duties given to Regional Committees authorized and created in RCW 28A.315.095. The Regional Committees have the statutory authority to hear and approve or disapprove proposals for changes in the organization of school districts, and address issues regarding bonded indebtedness, territory transfers, tax levies, and hold public hearings on every proposal for the formation of a new school district or for the transfer from one existing district to another of any territory in which children of school age reside. In addition, it was the intent of the legislature as promulgated in RCW 28A.315.015 to create Chapter 28A.315 to "incorporate into a single, comprehensive, school district organization law all essential provisions governing the formation and establishment of new school districts...". This section of the budget does not utilize the committees, structures, and processes required by 28A.315, and due to this conflict should be vetoed.

Further, the appropriation of \$250,000 is insufficient to perform the work requested. The legislation requires the commission to develop and recommend a comprehensive plan for the reorganization of Washington school districts for review and potential adoption. This is an extremely complex undertaking and significantly more comprehensive than the legislative redistricting process. Most school districts incur at least \$500 each, or an estimated \$125,000

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire

April 16, 2010

Page 2

for the state system, simply to adjust their director district boundaries every ten years based on the census data. This is a fairly simple and straightforward process, with none of the underlying issues associated with transfer of assets, bond indebtedness, reorganization plans, and a complete overhaul of School Director districts necessitated by a statewide consolidation boundary change.

In the 2001-03 biennium, the Redistricting Commission was appropriated \$496,000 for the biennium and an additional \$394,000 was provided to support the legislature's participation in the redistricting process. For the 2009-11 biennium, the Redistricting Commission received \$1,115,000 for this work. The process being described in the Budget bill for the school district reorganization commission is at least as complex, comprehensive and time consuming as the activities associated with census redistricting and will require the commission to hire appropriate staff support consistent with its mission.

Finally, I have several other concerns. At a time when we are attempting to reduce new commissions, councils, task forces, and governmental redundancies, this new commission seems to be in direct conflict with these new priorities. Coupled with the fact that the Legislature has recently passed legislation (2SHB 2617) designed to eliminate certain boards and commissions and to impose new restrictions on travel, subsistence, and lodging expenses, this new commission again appears to be in direct conflict with that identified direction. In addition, research done on school district size is inconclusive with regards to efficiency and effectiveness in terms of funding and student learning. As you know, the state of Washington is undertaking major educational reforms, most notably with the passage of E2SSB 6696. We should be focusing on creating the conditions that support a highly coordinated effort to attain a federal Race-To-The-Top grant and on evidence based activities that improve student learning. Now is not the time for disruptive shifts and realignments of our districts and Educational Service Districts.

In summary, ESSB 6444 Section 501, Subsection (1) (b) does not utilize the committees, structures, and processes required by 28A.315, underestimates significantly the costs required to perform the work required, and will be counterproductive in our mutual efforts to lead Washington State school districts to improve student learning. It is due to the aforementioned reasons that I am respectfully requesting a veto of the identified language in Section 501.

Sincerely,



Randy I. Dorn

State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction