

In this memorandum written just a few years before Speaker Sawyer proposed his reforms, Legislative Council Secretary Donald Sampson outlines several ideas similar to those that would be implemented under Sawyer, but dismisses them as "not feasible politically or not desirable for other reasons." Sawyer adopted the continuing session concept and the continuation of standing committees but found other solutions for modernizing legislative processes, including abolishing the Legislative Council itself.

STATE OF WASHINGTON
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
OLYMPIA

MEMORANDUM

TO:

FROM: Donald C. Sampson, Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: Interim legislative activity.

DATE: April 1, 1967

Problem:

The rapid population growth, the expanding responsibilities of state and local government and the complex problems of finance are constantly increasing the burdens of the state legislators. More complex bills are before every session and the legislators must make major decisions with little opportunity to obtain the background of the factors involved. The various states have all considered this urgent problem in varying degrees. Among suggested remedies have been the following:

1. Continuous sessions of the legislature, or at least regular annual sessions.
2. Continuation of the session standing committees during the interim periods.
3. Adoption of the Oklahoma structure in which every member of the legislature is a member of the Legislative Council and works on at least one committee during the interim period.
4. Large numbers of interim committees, sufficient to make every legislator a member of one or more.
5. Expansion of the working membership of a few major statutory legislative agencies, such as the Legislative Council and the Legislative Budget Committee.

Comment:

The first four of the above suggestions appear to be either not feasible politically or not desirable for other reasons in Washington state.

- (1) The annual sessions would require a two thirds vote of each house and the subsequent approval by the voters. So, not only would it be at least two years before it could be implemented, but it apparently is not yet acceptable to the legislature.
- (2) The idea of continuing standing committees was tried in Pennsylvania and was unsatisfactory in a number of respects. Standing committees with 35 or 45 members are completely impractical for interim activity involving travel, meetings, and substantial staff work. There is also a lack of coordination between the various activities and a lack

April 1, 1967

of central staffing, which Pennsylvania finally remedied.

- (3) The Oklahoma structure has worked well and provides an opportunity for every legislator to contribute to the research program and benefit therefrom, but requires a statutory change in our law. This change is apparently not acceptable to the Senate.
- (4) A proliferation of interim committees is wasteful and inefficient in many respects. It is difficult to acquire professional staffing and there is usually a delay in obtaining a staff member and then orienting him to the problems. There is no central housekeeping or administration set up and there is usually no provision for implementing conclusions by drafting bills. There is not maximum utilization of equipment and space, nor is there any cross check of substantive research.

(5) Expansion of existing legislative service agencies.

The Legislative Council in the last few bienniums has utilized a practice of appointing special members chosen for their knowledge and ability and their interest in specific areas of study. This procedure was approved by the Attorney General. Such special members receive the same per diem and travel reimbursement as the regular members and attend Council meetings as well as committee meetings whenever their committee work is discussed. The real value of the procedure lies in expanding the capabilities of the Council, reducing the number of committee assignments members must take, and adding to the know how in special fields.

Committees.

The present Legislative Council structure usually calls for twelve committees with membership ranging from 4 - 8. If the Legislative Council would approve, perhaps 54 special members as a maximum might be appointed, each serving on one Council committee. This would increase committee membership to, perhaps, 9 - 13. Presumably a regular Council member would always retain the committee chairmanship. The special members would be non voting on the Council, but would otherwise participate in all discussion and would vote on the subcommittee. In view of the difference in membership of the House and Senate, the special members could comprise, perhaps, 33 representatives and 21 senators.

Cost.

Since the special members would probably serve on only one committee, the additional cost for travel and per diem would, perhaps, run from \$1,000 to \$1,500 each per biennium. The research staff would probably not need an increase unless more committees were organized but there would be an increasing clerical burden which would require one or two additional staff members, with a total cost of, perhaps, \$10,000 per year for this addition. There would also be an increase in postage and telephone of, perhaps, \$5,000 for the biennium.

April 1, 1967

Implementation.

The basic action for adding special members would be carried out by the Council membership, first by the Executive Committee, followed by ratification of the total regular membership. It would not require formal action by the legislature unless a concurrent resolution (if deemed feasible) or a simple resolution to express the policy recommendation should be adopted. Otherwise, it would require informal conference of the officers of the Legislative Council to determine to what degree they might be receptive to the proposal.

Other interim agencies.

The same principle, of course, could be applied to the other statutory agencies, including the Legislative Budget Committee, the Joint Committee on Transportation, and the Joint Committee on Education.

DCS:pf