

School Director bill signed by Governor

A bill that would provide first-class school districts (those with greater than 2,000 students) an opportunity to create up to two at-large director positions was signed by Governor Gregoire on March 13, the final day of the 2008 legislative session.

Senate Bill 6183 amends RCW 28A.343.050 to allow first-class school districts to request of local voters the reapportionment of their school director districts, after approving and submitting a resolution to their local educational service district. If local voters approve, first-class districts can dissolve their current director areas and reapportion them into four director districts by geographical area and one at large district or three director districts by geographical area with two at large.

The statutory authority to allow the formation of at-large director areas was previously only provided to second-class school district (those with fewer than 2,000 students). The Eastmont School Board discovered this limitation last fall when they considered restructuring their director districts to allow at-large positions.

The Eastmont School Board sought to amend the law, and the bill was sponsored by Senator Linda Evans Parlette and supported by the North Central ESD. The bill unanimously passed the Senate and the House before being signed by the Governor.

The intent of the bill was to help facilitate more citizen participation for serving on school boards because districts will be able to draw from a greater population of residents to fill open positions, according to Board President Brad Hawkins.

The effort for the Eastmont Board was a confirmation for how the legislative process can work. "This was an instance where the law benefited some school districts but not all. Eastmont promoted the change because we thought it would not only be beneficial to us but potentially to many school districts throughout the state," Hawkins said. "Our board is very pleased that the idea received unanimous support and was able to make it all the way through the legislative process in 60 days before the session ended".

The board intends to request voter approval to proceed with a restructuring of their director areas in this fall's election.