

Washington's colleges may set tuition levels

OLYMPIA (AP) — The Washington state House has signed a "Declaration of Independence" for the state's public four-year colleges, cutting them loose to set their own tuition levels.

But the Senate may play the part of the Redcoats.

The House vote was an unexpectedly strong 95-1 Monday night, but the sponsor conceded it's "an extremely uphill fight," if not a lost cause, in the Senate.

Under the bill, HB2605, trustees or regents at each of the colleges could raise tuition up to 10 percent per year, setting different rates for different programs if they wanted to cover costs or make money on the more profitable offerings.

A number of senators feel the Legislature should set tuition, rather than allow local control and potentially a patchwork of widely varying rates. Still others say the state should be responsible for funding higher education adequately and that the bill

amounts to surrender.

The bill is an extension of a "fiscal home-rule" law passed last year to allow colleges to keep their tuition dollars on campus and to have more control over their financial affairs.

The measure's sponsor, House Higher Education Committee Chairman Ken Jacobsen, D-Seattle, dubbed it a "Declaration of Independence." He said it would give colleges more control over their own destinies at a time when spending-limit Initiative 601 puts a squeeze on state-level funding.

"Every time the economy gets bad, the support for higher education goes down," he said in an interview. "What we're doing with higher education funding isn't working. We are one of only four states where tuition is set by legislators."

The current policy is to peg tuition to a percentage of the cost of an education at the community colleges, a regional university or the University of Washington and Washing-

ton State University. Tuition covers between a quarter and a third of the costs, with taxpayers covering the rest.

The changes would take effect in the 1995-96 school year.

"This is a significant shift in policy, from having state-supported higher education to state-assisted higher education," Jacobsen said during the debate. "If we can't adequately fund higher education, we need to give the institutions more authority to raise it themselves."

Jacobsen conceded that both the Senate higher education and budget chairmen have expressed reservations and either of them could kill the bill.

The bill also would make it a state policy to place Washington's higher education system among the top five in the nation by 2002. And it says colleges would be funded at no less than 90 percent of their peer institutions around the country.

Toxic violations may be part of pattern

PALO ALTO, Calif. (AP) — State inspectors believe recent toxic violations at Stanford University might not be isolated incidents, but instead part of a continuing pattern, according to a report in the San Jose Mercury News.

Following a university-commissioned audit that criticized Stanford's hazardous waste procedures, the school was cited 11 times within the past few months for improperly handling hazardous waste, the newspaper reported in Sunday's editions.

Since 1988, the school has been cited more than 50 times for violations ranging from keeping waste in rusting and mislabeled containers to mixing reactive chemicals and inadequately training employees, the newspaper said.

And in 1992, authorities cited "literally hundreds and hundreds" of potentially dangerous receptacles of corrosives, sulfuric and hydrochloric acid, cancer-causing asbestos and benzene, and lethal cyanide, it reported.

Inspectors subsequently concluded Stanford had "intentionally or negligently falsified inspection records," the paper reported.

"Maybe once a year or once every several years we'll deal with a case of this magnitude," said Allan Hirsch, spokesman for the state Department of Toxic Substances Control.

The latest violations are "part of the overall pattern of problems at Stanford," he added. "We don't see it as an isolated matter."

Hirsch declined to estimate the total fines the university might have to pay. He said it could be

as much as \$25,000 per day per violation. But another department official who requested anonymity told the newspaper Stanford's fines could reach \$1 million.

John Holmes, Stanford's associate director of environmental health and safety department, said the university was working "very hard to clarify things and solve anything (state inspectors) have raised."

In an internal memorandum dating back to 1991, however, Stanford's manager of lab safety wrote that in the face of "increasingly stringent requirements" the university may have compromised safety guidelines "primarily by maintaining excellent professional working relationships with the regulators."

Manager Peter Burnes, who authored the letter, wrote that in the future, "the most likely course will be one demanding more attention and resources allocated, both centrally and locally, to maintain marginal non-compliance."

Burnes said he wrote the letter to ward off university budget cuts.

The document has emerged in a lawsuit against the university by health and safety engineer Gary Schell.

Schell said the university cut his pay and denied him promotions in retaliation for his complaints to supervisors about safety violations. In the suit he filed last year, Schell sought approximately \$70,000 as well as punitive damages.

Elderly jumper killed after chute fails to open

SHERIDAN (AP) — An 85-year-old iron worker with a bent for adventure was killed on his first attempt at skydiving when his parachute didn't open.

Lee Wellington Perry Sr. of Portland was on a static line. Linked to the plane, it opens a small pilot chute, which automatically deploys the main parachute a few moments after the jump.

Somehow, the pilot chute never fell free from Perry's body and neither of the parachutes opened, said Ted Mayfield, owner of the Pacific Jump Center near Sheridan. Perry did not pull his emergency chute.



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New titles for measures approved

OLYMPIA (AP) — New ballot titles for initiatives dealing with gay rights and abortion have been approved by Thurston County Superior Court Judge Richard Strophy.

The titles will appear on the initiative petitions and will be on the general election ballot in November if supporters gather at least 181,667 valid signatures of registered voters by July 8.

Strophy on Monday gave final approval for the new title for anti-gay rights initiative 608. He had given tentative approval to the new title last Friday.

Initiative 608, as it now reads, would bar enforcement of laws that protect gays from discrimination based on sexual-orientation. It also would prohibit schools from presenting information showing that homosexuality can be a healthy lifestyle.

The abortion proposal, Initiative 611, title written by Strophy reads:

"Shall informed consent for abortions be defined, and require a 24-hour waiting period imposed and related criminal penalties be created?"

The title written by the attorney general did not mention the 24-hour waiting period.

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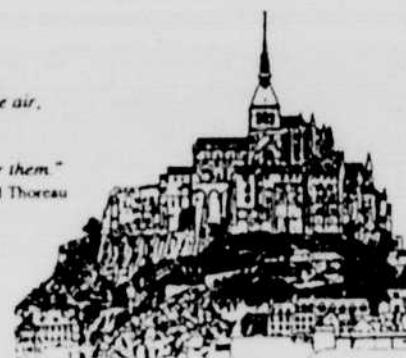
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