

SB 2034
Senate Appropriations
Education and Environment Division
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Chair Sorvaag and Committee members: My name is Joann Kitchens, and I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 2034 on behalf of Lake Region State College. Lake Region supports all of SB2034. In Section 1, we would agree that a school should not be punished for increasing their enrollments, and it would take years at that continued higher rate to realize the efficiencies gained by having the larger enrollment.

I would especially like to speak to Section 2 which transfers the wind energy and law enforcement courses to the career and technical education instructional program classification. In the 21-23 biennium, LRSC produced 1,415 credits in the Law Enforcement classes and 532 in wind. Because they do not fall in the CTE credit area, Law Enforcement only has a weighted factor of 1 and Wind only has a weighted factor of 2.5. CTE has a factor of 5.

When comparing the Law Enforcement and Wind classes to our core classes, they cost more than 7 times the amount of a core class.

Originally, the Law Enforcement classes were in the Core area because they have a Criminal Justice prefix. Most Criminal Justice classes are theory/lecture and not hands-on experiences.

The Law Enforcement expenses are high because of all the direct training costs needed to conduct the hands-on training. It includes costs such as squad cars from D.O.T., replacement of tires on those cars as the training is very hard on the tires. It also includes guns, tasers, range costs to maneuver the cars, ammunition and facility rental for areas to conduct the training.

Currently, the demand is high for Police Officers, but the enrollment has been lower due to world events. That also affects the ability to be able to gain some efficiencies with greater numbers.

The Wind expenses include transportation to the turbine for hands-on training. It also includes special equipment needed for climbing the turbine. Faculty are often compensated higher to compete with industry.

The space dedicated to Wind is at least 10-15 times that which is necessary for a program such as Business or Marketing. This space must be maintained from the exterior roof to the floor, heated, cooled, and cleaned.

Some of the more significant lab spaces within the wind footprint include: the hydraulics lab, high voltage lab, rope access area, small space confinement simulator, and the electronics simulation racks.

The operational lab, the turbine, is likely right up there with the most expensive program-related component anywhere in the NDUS. We don't have a program without it, and we wouldn't have it without also having the program. While it serves as part of the college's physical plant and provides a return on investment, the program faculty also must be compensated for maintenance and repair, it must be turned off (not generating power-thus lost revenue) so faculty and students can climb, train, and maintain it.

The definition of Career and Technical Education is: "A series of courses that teach students the skills and knowledge they need for specific jobs and careers." Law Enforcement and Wind definitely fall within that category.

This change affects LRSC this biennium by increasing formula funding by \$1.2M and decreasing the need for the \$945,308 minimum amount payable. Therefore, Lake Region State College's net increase in general funds for the 2025-27 biennium would be \$289,182.

If SB2034 passes, I would ask that we consider making the adjustment after the minimum payable. One could argue that if these two programs had been included in CTE in the last biennium, those appropriations would have been much higher and we still would not be at the 96% mark. I realize nothing can change last biennium, but this would at least keep us from being short yet another biennium.

Thank you for considering Senate Bill 2034.