

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2509

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Ecology & Parks, February 15, 1996

Title: An act relating to maritime historic restoration and preservation.

Brief Description: Funding maritime historic restoration and preservation.

Sponsors: House Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Representatives Reams, Jacobsen, Radcliff, Basich, Kessler, Chopp, Dickerson, Hatfield, Poulsen and Murray; by request of Secretary of State).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ecology & Parks: 2/14/96, 2/15/96 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Fairley, Vice Chair; Hochstatter, McAuliffe, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: The Virginia V is the last remaining passenger steamship of the Puget Sound "Mosquito Fleet." Listed on the National Register of Historic Sites and designated as a National Historic Landmark, the Virginia V offers a unique lesson in Puget Sound maritime history. The steamship is now operated by the nonprofit Virginia V Foundation for public and private cruises on Lake Union. Built of old-growth Douglas fir in 1922, the Virginia V needs costly repairs to the hull to retain Coast Guard certification, including \$500,000 for immediate needs and \$2 million over the next 20 to 25 years.

The Lady Washington is a full-sized replica of a square-rigged sailing ship built in Boston in 1787 and sailed around Cape Horn by Captain Robert Gray, who discovered Grays Harbor and the Columbia River. It was the first American vessel to explore the Pacific Northwest. The ship was built in 1989 to celebrate the state Centennial. Operated by the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport, the Lady Washington moves around the northwest offering day sails and tours to the public.

While both ships are managed by nonprofit foundations that are able to provide for ongoing operation of the vessels, the foundations do not have the funds to provide for capital needs of repair and maintenance. Without additional funding, the Virginia V will be unable to complete repairs required by the Coast Guard to maintain passenger certification.

Summary of Bill: When completing vessel registration, boat owners have the opportunity to make a voluntary donation to support the maritime historic restoration and preservation activities of the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport and the Steamer Virginia V Foundation.

After providing an amount for necessary administrative expenses to the Department of Licensing, all funds provided through voluntary donation are distributed equally between the two foundations.

If either foundation ceases to exist, the balance of funds is paid to the remaining organization. If both foundations cease to exist, the voluntary donation provisions of the act are discontinued, and the balance of the funds escheat to the state. One half of any funds which escheat to the state are to be provided to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the remainder deposited into the parks renewal and stewardship account.

The Secretary of State, the directors of the state historic societies, and representatives of the recreational boating community must review the success of the voluntary donation program and report their findings to the Legislature by January 31, 1998. The report must include findings on the potential to expand the voluntary funding to other historic vessels.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 1996.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill provides an important opportunity to protect these historic vessels. The program is entirely voluntary.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Reams, original prime sponsor.