

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2840

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs*

Title: An act relating to plastic holding devices for containers.

Brief Description: Prohibiting the sale of plastic connecting rings for beverage or other containers.

Sponsor(s): Representatives J. Kohl, Rust, Casada, Brekke, Pruitt, Rasmussen, H. Sommers, Valle, Winsley, Leonard and Orr.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs, February 6, 1992, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Bray; Brekke; G. Fisher; J. Kohl; Pruitt; and Sprenkle.

Minority Report: *Without recommendation.* Signed by 5 members: Representatives Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Edmondson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Neher; D. Sommers; and Van Luven.

Staff: Harry Reinert (786-7110).

Background: A number of consumer products, particularly soft drinks and juice, are distributed in packages connected by a plastic holder. The holders are often composed of rings. There is some evidence that birds, fish, and wildlife can become entangled in the rings, causing injury or death. Maine has enacted legislation requiring plastic connecting rings to break when a container is removed and to degrade within a reasonable period of time.

Washington has prohibited the sale of cans which use metal rings which detach from the container when it is opened. A person who violates this provision is subject to a maximum penalty of \$500.

Summary of Substitute Bill: After December 31, 1993, a person may not sell any product in containers that is connected by plastic rings or another plastic device unless the device is designed to degrade within a reasonable period of time and is designed to break when the container is removed. The Department of Ecology may approve experimental devices that meet this intent. The department may delay application of the prohibition for a class of containers if the person demonstrates that a source of supply of connecting rings is not yet available, but will be available within a reasonable period of time. The department may delay application of the requirements to a specific date.

Violation of the prohibition on the sale of connecting rings that do not meet the required standards would be subject to the same penalty as sale of containers with detachable metal rings.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill delays the date for compliance for one year and allows the Department of Ecology to grant a further extension if a source of supply is not yet available.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Plastic connecting rings and other plastic debris, particularly in the marine environment, can be harmful to fish, birds, and marine mammals. This bill is a reasonable effort to reduce the danger these devices pose to wildlife.

Testimony Against: The manufacturers of plastic connecting rings are already in the process of making these devices available. This bill is unnecessary.

Witnesses: Representative J. Kohl (pro); Jeff Parsons, National Audubon Society (pro); David Michener, Washington Soft Drink Association (con); Mike Lynch, Illinois Tool Works (con); Ann Morgan, Department of Natural Resources (pro); and Bill Fritz, Anheuser-Busch, Washington Food Processors (with concerns).