

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2526

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR, FEBRUARY 28, 1992

Brief Description: Formally recognizing the Washington state rural development council.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Ludwig, Inslee, Bray, Chandler, Hochstatter, Valle, Rayburn, Moyer, Roland, Jacobsen, Haugen, Jones, McLean, Sprenkle and Rasmussen)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Matson, Chairman; Bluechel, McMullen, Moore, Murray, and Skratek.

Staff: Patrick Woods (786-7430)

Hearing Dates: February 27, 1992; February 28, 1992

BACKGROUND:

During the decade of the '80s and into the early '90s much of rural Washington experienced economic distress and population decline as compared to the rapidly growing Puget Sound region. The reasons for the dramatic economic difference between the two regions of the state are complex and varied. However, the challenge facing resource-based industries as compared to the dramatic growth opportunities in aerospace and technology based products has been one of the major contributors to this phenomenon. The regional economic disparity has provided a unique opportunity for a meaningful economic partnership between both areas of Washington and will assist in transferring excessive business growth in the Puget Sound to rural areas that are in need of increased business activity.

In 1990, the federal government by presidential initiative established the Rural Development Council. The council is comprised of representatives from the federal, state, local and tribal governments along with private and nonprofit sectors in an effort to promote coordination and cooperation in promoting economic vitality in the rural areas.

In 1990, the Legislature under the Growth Management Act established an urban/rural linkage program within the Department of Community Development. The program makes grants to local nonprofit organizations for rural development or for sharing growth outside the Puget Sound region.

SUMMARY:

The Legislature recognizes the efforts of the Washington State Rural Development Council and encourages state entities to participate in the council's activities.

The council must be located in a branch or agency of the federal or state government in accordance with a memorandum of understanding. The state's share of the costs incurred by the council are limited to those amounts appropriated for its use or allocated by the Department of Community Development for the support of the council.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENTS:

The Washington State Rural Development Council is formally recognized by the state of Washington. The council is a partnership between state, federal and local governments, tribal governments, and the public and private sectors and is organized as a mutual effort to address the problems facing rural communities, enhance their viability and self-reliance, and look for ways to coordinate and consolidate the efforts of all who serve rural communities.

The council's mission and objectives include: coordinating and applying private, local, state, tribal and federal resources to support the development of viable, self-reliant rural communities according to locally conceived and driven strategies; serving as a forum for communication between members of the rural community; operating as a change agent and a sounding board for emerging issues; acting as an advocate for change in policy and rules that inhibit the viability of rural communities; serving as a resource developer to maximize knowledge of available resources to assist rural communities; providing a forum for policy analysis concerning existing and proposed rural development strategies in Washington; promoting coordination and cooperation between all levels of government and private, public and nonprofit groups in order to promote rural economic vitality; facilitating communication between rural communities and organizations in other sectors of the state and nation; promoting the establishment of rural/urban linkage partnerships that will be mutually beneficial in alleviating the distress of rapid economic growth, or decline, and promoting economic vitality; identifying and addressing federal, state, and local administrative barriers that hinder economic vitality; and identifying and providing opportunities to educate and inform state, federal, local, and local policy and program staff as to the needs of rural Washington.

The council is located in either a federal or state agency as determined by the council. The costs incurred by the council are to be limited to the amounts appropriated by the state and federal governments along with membership fees and grants from public and private sources.

The Legislature intends to establish a partnership between urban and rural areas of the state and, in so doing, improve the quality of life and provide quality job opportunities for each citizen of the state.

The existing requirement under the urban/rural linkage program that grants be limited to local nonprofit organizations is removed.

A new project within the Department of Community Development urban/rural linkage program is established to assist businesses in high growth urban areas within the Puget Sound to locate new, or expand existing business operations within rural communities throughout the state. The project provides that the Department of Community Development establish contracts with the local governments including local planning departments or for-profit or nonprofit corporations that wish to provide businesses in their high growth areas assistance in finding alternative locations outside their existing region. In addition, the department may also establish contracts with similar agencies and organizations in rural areas that wish to attract businesses to their locality.

The department is required to develop contract criteria in consultation with local governments, nonprofit and for-profit corporations outlining the scope, level and time frame of services to be provided to businesses. The Department of Community Development, in consultation with the Department of Trade and Economic Development, Employment Security and the Department of Revenue, is to provide contract parties with general information on possible industrial sites, local labor market and economic conditions.

TESTIMONY FOR:

The establishment of a Rural Development Council will provide a home for rural issues in state government; promote cooperation between the public and private sector; and support the development of viable, self reliant rural communities in Washington State.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Representative Curt Ludwig, prime sponsor