

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5060

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES,
JANUARY 31, 1991

Brief Description: Reviewing alternative environmental strategies.

SPONSORS: Senators Metcalf, Owen, Talmadge, Snyder, Gaspard, A. Smith and Conner.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5060 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Metcalf, Chairman; Oke, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Barr, Conner, Owen, Patterson, Snyder, and Sutherland.

Staff: Gary Wilburn (786-7453)

Hearing Dates: January 17, 1991; January 31, 1991

BACKGROUND:

The Environment 2010 Project conducted by the Washington Department of Ecology and other studies have concluded that traditional "command-and-control" environmental regulatory strategies are insufficient alone to address the increasing complexity and magnitude of environmental problems. The Environment 2010 report identified several reasons: (1) there are too many sources to control effectively; (2) environmental problems should be dealt with more holistically, to avoid the "shell game" of shifting emissions among environmental media; (3) prevention should be preferred to reaction to a problem; (4) the burden of environmental protection should be decentralized so that limited resources can be most efficiently used to address priority problems.

The report identified several means to supplement regulatory problems, including education and technical assistance, economic incentives and disincentives, and pollution prevention. Such techniques may engender a new ethic of individual responsibility, self-regulation and voluntary change.

A study conducted by the Scientific Advisory Board of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concluded that there were several highly ranked environmental problems which were not being adequately addressed relative to other problems within the traditional mission of that agency. The report made several recommendations that may be applicable to state environmental strategies, including: (1) the EPA should

target its environmental protection efforts to greatest risk reduction; (2) EPA should attach as much importance to reducing ecological risk as it does to reducing human health risk; (3) EPA should improve the data and analytical methodologies that support risk assessment; (4) EPA should reflect risk-based priorities in strategic planning and budget processes; (5) EPA should emphasize pollution prevention; and (6) EPA should increase efforts to integrate environmental considerations into broader aspects of public policy.

SUMMARY:

The Commission on Environmental Policy is created. The commission is made up of at least five members appointed by the Governor, having experience and expertise in environmental policy development. The Governor is to seek a balance of interests and perspectives, including the general public, environment, business, agriculture, and government. The director of the Ecology Department shall chair the commission.

The commission shall review existing programs and alternative methods to achieve comparable or greater environmental protection, including market incentives, integrated permits, expansion of bubble and offset policies, pollution prevention programs, education, and other means. The commission shall also review and compare relative funding levels of programs and the environmental threats such programs address. Also to be reviewed are proposals for environmental trust funds for the purpose of comprehensive funding mechanisms for environmental quality problems.

Periodic reports shall be submitted to the Governor and legislative committees, and the final report shall be submitted by December 15, 1992.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The method of appointing the commission is changed. The commission shall consist of five members. One member is appointed by the legislative leader of each political caucus in the Senate and House of Representatives. A fifth member to serve as chairman is chosen by the four appointed members.

Appropriation: yes

Revenue: no

Fiscal Note: requested January 10, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR:

The bill will further state efforts to achieve comprehensive environmental protection strategies.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Chris Gregoire, Dept. of Ecology (pro); Kathleen Collins, AWC (pro); Bruce Wishart, Sierra Club

