

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5387

AS OF FEBRUARY 8, 1991

Brief Description: Limiting requirements that beer labels reflect alcohol content.

SPONSORS: Senators West, Moore, Matson, Murray, McCaslin, McMullen and Newhouse.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Staff: Patrick Woods (786-7430)

Hearing Dates: February 13, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In August 1990, the Liquor Control Board established an administrative rule requiring all bottled beer to carry alcohol content labeling by January 1992. The board's stated intention in establishing this rule was to promote consumer awareness regarding the alcohol content of beer.

The federal government prohibits the labeling of alcohol content on bottled beer unless specifically required by the state. The federal requirement was established in an effort to prevent beer companies competing on the basis of alcohol content.

The Washington microbreweries contend that state labeling requirements will be a considerable financial and administrative burden as they will be required to label beer for both interstate and intrastate sale. There are approximately 15 microbreweries in the state that produce less than 60,000 barrels of malt beverages a year.

SUMMARY:

Microbreweries that produce less than 60,000 barrels of malt beverages in a calendar year are exempt from rules requiring brewers to state the alcohol content of malt beverages on individual containers.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested