

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6278

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR, FEBRUARY 7, 1992

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington rural development council.

SPONSORS: Senators Skratek, Newhouse, Snyder, Anderson, Jesernig, Patterson, Owen, Erwin and Barr

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6278 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Patrick Woods (786-7430)

Hearing Dates: January 29, 1992; February 7, 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 disparity between the two regions of the state are complex and varied. However, the challenges 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.

In response to this period of rural recession, a series of state programs were established or expanded to specifically address the problems facing rural communities with a primary focus being placed on "distressed areas." However, the legislatively mandated Service Delivery Task Force in its report to the Legislature stressed the need for policy and programmatic change in economic development programs, with particular emphasis on the following areas: clear articulation of comprehensive policies; need for delivery of services at the local levels; collaboration and building of trust among participants; and evaluation of programs.

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.

SUMMARY:

The original bill was not considered.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

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.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 27, 1992

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: Mary McBride, Palouse Economic Development Council (pro); Lorna Lee Govin, Squaxin Island Tribe (pro)