

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1854

As Reported By House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to maritime historic restoration and preservation.

Brief Description: Aiding maritime historic restoration and preservation.

Sponsors: Representatives Ogden, Jacobsen, Basich, Jones, R. Meyers, Kessler and J. Kohl; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, March 3, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Campbell; Conway; King; and Pruitt.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Dyer.

Staff: Bonnie Austin (786-7135).

Background: Washington has had a number of offices, commissions, and societies dedicated to historic preservation. These include three state historical societies, an Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the 1989 Washington Centennial Commission. In 1989, the State Historical Society was directed to plan and implement a commemorative celebration of the bicentennials of the maritime accomplishments of Robert Gray, George Vancouver, and the establishment of a Spanish outpost at Neah Bay.

The state levies an annual excise tax on watercraft, administered by the Department of Licensing. The annual amount of the tax is 0.5 percent of the fair market value of the watercraft, or \$5, whichever is greater.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A Maritime Historic Restoration and Preservation Council is created. The council will consist of: (1) four legislators; (2) four members of the recreational boating community, appointed by the governor; (3) the secretary of state; (4) the state historic preservation officer; (5) the state archivist; (6) one representative from the maritime trades; and (7) the director of the Washington State Historical Society. The secretary of state will chair the council.

The council is responsible for contracting with nonprofit organizations and other entities for the restoration, preservation, replication, and operation of historic marine facilities, vessels, exhibits, and locations. The council will also provide educational and historical programs. The state does not assume liability associated with the use of any of these activities, nor does it acquire title or other ownership interest in any of the vessels or programs.

In addition to the existing watercraft excise tax, an annual surcharge of \$1 will be charged on each registered watercraft. The maritime historic restoration and preservation account is created. All receipts from the surcharge will be deposited into this account. The council must approve expenditures from this account. The council is also directed to seek federal, state, local, and private monies to match funds provided by the council.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: A section is added to ensure that contracts do not violate the state constitution's lending of credit prohibition. A technical reference change is made in the surcharge section. A representative of the maritime trades is added to the council.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 16, 1993.

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

Testimony For: Maritime history is a very unique element of Washington's history. These projects attract tourism. This will expand the historical understanding of Washington's citizens. This is an appropriate and non-burdensome source of funding. Washington maritime history includes the rivers of Eastern Washington and the Pacific coast, not just Puget Sound. Washington has a vivid longshore history. Approximately 70,000 residents have visited the tall ships in Grays Harbor, as well as about 7,000 children. This stimulates the children to think about exploration. Private boat owners who have historical vessels support this bill. The Washington State Capital Museum has a maritime chapter.

This bill would cover everything from Native American boating to modern boating.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Michelle Burkheimer, Office of Secretary of State (pro); Les Bolton, Grays Harbor Historical Scaport (pro); Curtiss H. Gruye, Motor Vessel "Lotus" (pro); and Derek Valley, Washington State Capital Museum (pro).