HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5320

As Passed House
April 9, 1993

Title: An act relating to limits on phosphorus contents in certain detergents.

Brief Description: Adopting limits on phosphorus contents in certain detergents.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, Talmadge, Winsley, Deccio, Moore and Sutherland).

Brief History:
Reported by House Committee on:
  Environmental Affairs, March 25, 1993, DP;
Passed House, April 9, 1993, 74-24.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Flemming, Vice Chair; Van Luven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Holm; L. Johnson; J. Kohl; Linville; and Roland.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Edmondson; Foreman; Hansen; and Sheahan.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: Phosphorous is a naturally occurring element that stimulates plant growth. When introduced in freshwater, phosphorous promotes growth of weeds and algae and can degrade water quality.

Laundry and dishwashing detergents are a significant source of phosphorous. Other sources include wastewater treatment discharges, industrial discharges, decaying plants, animal waste, run-off from residential lawns and agricultural fields, and soil erosion.

A number of states, counties, and cities have limited the amount of phosphorous allowed in laundry and dishwashing detergents. Spokane adopted an ordinance in 1990 that limits the amount of phosphorous in detergents. King County

adopted a similar ordinance in September 1992. The
ordinance does not become effective until six cities within
the county adopt the county ordinance. Reduction in
phosphorous levels can significantly decrease costs for
wastewater treatment plants.

Laundry detergents without phosphorous are widely available.
The cost for such detergents varies regionally but is
generally competitive with detergents containing
phosphorous. Dishwashing detergents with reduced levels of
phosphorous are currently available but on a limited basis.

Summary of Bill: Laundry detergents containing more than
0.5 percent phosphorous cannot be sold or distributed for
sale within the state after July 1, 1994. Dishwashing
detergents containing more than 8.7 percent phosphorous
cannot be sold or distributed for sale within the state
after July 1, 1994.

The phosphorous limits do not apply to the sale or
distribution of detergents for commercial and industrial
uses. The Department of Ecology must notify major
distributors and wholesalers of the statewide limit on
phosphorous in detergents. The attorney general or
appropriate city or county prosecuting attorney is
authorized to enjoin any violation of the phosphorous
limits.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Limiting the amount of phosphorous in
laundry and dishwashing detergents is a cost-effective way
to improve water quality in the state's rivers and lakes.
Detergents without phosphorous are widely available.
Detergents containing phosphorous are inadequately labelled,
making it difficult for consumers to choose detergents
without phosphorous.

Testimony Against: Limiting the amount of phosphorous will
not improve water quality because detergents are only one of
several sources of phosphorous. The addition of phosphorous
can improve the water quality in some rivers and streams in
the state.

Witnesses: Senator Karen Fraser, prime sponsor (pro); Bob
Storer, King County Surface Water Management (pro); Mike
Llewelyn, Department of Ecology (pro); Lynn Singleton,
Department of Ecology (pro); Judith Smeltzer, FMC
Corporation (con); Bruce Wishart, Sierra Club (pro); Paul

Cosgrove, Soap and Detergent Association (con); Lisa Thatcher, Washington Food Dealers (pro); and Cory Rewding, Kenny Lilliquist, Megi Sullivan, Russ Goer, and Leslie Huff, Capital High School (pro).