

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6087

As Reported By House Committee On:
Trade, Economic Development & Housing

Title: An act relating to farmworker housing.

Brief Description: Concerning the health and safety of farmworkers' housing.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Winsley, Moyer, Talmadge and Pelz).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Trade, Economic Development & Housing, February 23, 1994,
DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Wineberry, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Campbell; Casada; Conway; Morris; Quall; Sheldon; Springer and Valle.

Staff: Kenny Pittman (786-7392).

Background: The State Board of Health establishes rules that regulate labor camps through the State Department of Health. These rules include standards developed by the State Department of Labor and Industries concerning sanitation and temporary labor camps.

The Department of Health regulates approximately 160 housing sites that provide housing for about 8,000 persons in temporary housing. The rules do not apply to housing consisting of four or less units or housing with less than 10 occupants. They do not apply to housing that is occupied on a year-round basis.

Concern has been expressed over the lack of an adequate supply of housing to meet the demand during peak harvest periods. Other concerns have been expressed over the lack of adequate inspections and the impact of building and zoning codes on the development of housing for farmworkers.

Summary of Amended Bill: A joint legislative task force on farmworker housing is established. The task force is composed of two members of the Senate, appointed by the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, and two members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the chairperson of the House Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

The task force must submit draft legislation by January 30, 1995, designed to improve the quality, supply and affordability of farmworker housing. The legislation may suggest changes in statutes controlling zoning, building codes, taxes, inspection requirements and financial incentives to construct or renovate farmworker housing.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The amended bill removes reference to the definitions, the statutory licensing requirements, and revisions to the interagency agreement on labor camps. The membership of the joint legislative task force on farmworker housing is reduced from six members to four members.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The condition of farmworker housing has been improving, but there is still more that can be done. The study by the task force will let us identify problems before we develop solutions to them. The amended bill is the best approach.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Kathy Stout, Department of Health (pro for amended bill); and Jim Halstrom, Washington State Horticultural Association (pro for amended bill).