

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6556

As Passed House - Amended
March 2, 1994

Title: An act relating to the rental of public lands.

Brief Description: Allowing a nonprofit television reception improvement district to rent space from the department of natural resources for less than the fair market value of the property.

Sponsors: Senators Hargrove and Snyder.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 25, 1994, DPA;
Passed House - Amended, March 2, 1994, 96-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Pruitt, Chair; R. Johnson, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; McMorris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee; Linville; Schoesler; Sheldon; B. Thomas; Valle and Wolfe.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: The Department of Natural Resources may lease state lands for a variety of purposes, including commercial, industrial, residential, agricultural, and recreational uses. In setting the lease rate, the department must ensure a fair market rental return to the state or appropriate trust. The department currently leases some high-elevation areas as sites for transmitters to reinforce and redirect television signals.

Citizens within a county may petition to form a television reception improvement district. The purpose of such a district is to serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity in the construction, maintenance, and operation of television and FM radio translator stations. There are currently approximately 15 television reception improvement districts in the state; the Department of Natural Resources leases sites to five of them.

Summary of Bill: A nonprofit television reception improvement district would pay 50 percent of the fair market lease rental rate if there is a general fund appropriation to compensate the trusts for the remainder of the fair market rental rate.

The act is null and void unless specific funding for its purposes is provided in the budget.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 1994.

Testimony For: This will help a district in a very isolated area be able to receive American television stations. Rental rates for the site have increased over time, and the community may not be able to afford the lease without some help. The amount of state money involved is small. The ability to receive the signals is important to the local school district. The state has adopted a similar policy for ham radio operators.

Testimony Against: The bill broaches a broader concern about when it is appropriate to provide state subsidies. Providing a subsidy and then taking it away may create ill will.

Witnesses: Senator Jim Hargrove, prime sponsor (pro); Rich Wilson, Crescent School District (pro); Helen Schnabel, Crescent TV District (pro); and Stan Biles, Department of Natural Resources (with concerns).