

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1667

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As Reported By House Committee On:  
Environmental Affairs

**Title:** An act relating to on-site sewage additives.

**Brief Description:** Prohibiting additives for on-site sewage disposal systems.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Romero, H. Myers, Heavey, Finkbeiner and Wolfe.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Environmental Affairs, February 18, 1993, DPS.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Flemming, Vice Chair; Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Edmondson; Foreman; Hansen; Holm; L. Johnson; J. Kohl; Linville; and Roland.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Van Luven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member and Sheahan.

**Staff:** Rick Anderson (786-7114).

**Background:** Septic tank additives are generally used to control odors and to reduce the frequency in which sludge must be removed.

The active ingredients of these products vary greatly. Such products generally contain chlorinated organic solvents, strong acids or bases, or relatively innocuous nutrient supplements intended to enhance bacterial growth.

Research indicates that such additives are ineffective at best, and may be harmful. Consumers using additives may be at risk in two ways. First, use of additives may ruin the drainfield and result in costly repair. Second, some additives, especially those containing chlorinated organic solvents, may contribute to groundwater contamination.

The Department of Health is in the process of developing rules for septic and other on-site systems. These rules, in part, ban the use of septic tank additives containing acids, bases, and chlorinated organic solvents. The proposed rules do not ban the sale or distribution of such additives.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The use, sale and distribution of septic tank additives is prohibited beginning July 1, 1994. The Department of Health may review and approve an additive for sale within the state. Any costs incurred by the department in reviewing the additive is to be paid by the applicant.

Selling or distributing an additive is subject to a civil penalty of \$50 per additive. The Department of Health and local health jurisdictions are required to issue a written warning to retailers and distributors prior to issuing a civil penalty. The Department of Health is responsible for notifying major distributors and wholesalers of the prohibition on septic tank additives.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The substitute clarifies that illegal use of a septic tank additive is not subject to a fine.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Septic tank additives should be prohibited because they have no apparent benefit, and can damage septic tank systems and create groundwater pollution.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Witnesses:** Mark Soltman, Department of Health; Gregg Grunenfelder, Environmental Health Directors; Joe Danials, Washington State Water/Wastewater Association; and Doris Cellarius, Sierra Club.