

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5221

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON TRADE, TECHNOLOGY
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, JANUARY 26, 1994

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington rural development council.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Trade, Technology & Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Skratek, Erwin, M. Rasmussen, Deccio and Barr)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRADE, TECHNOLOGY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5221 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Skratek, Chairman; Sheldon, Vice Chairman; Bluechel, Cantu, Erwin, M. Rasmussen and Williams.

Staff: Jeffrey Baird (786-7444)

Hearing Dates: February 5, 1993; February 18, 1993; January 20, 1994; January 26, 1994

BACKGROUND:

Over the past decade, much of rural Washington experienced economic distress and population decline as compared to the rapidly growing Puget Sound region. The reasons for the dramatic disparity between the two regions of the state are complex and varied. However, the challenges facing resource-based industries, as opposed to the dramatic growth opportunities in aerospace and technology-based products, has been one of the major contributors to this phenomenon.

In response to this period of rural recession, a series of state programs were established or expanded to specifically address the problems facing rural communities with a primary focus being placed on "distressed areas." However, the legislatively mandated Service Delivery Task Force in its report to the Legislature stressed the need for policy and programmatic change in economic development programs, with particular emphasis on the following areas: clear articulation of comprehensive policies; need for delivery of services at the local levels; collaboration and building of trust among participants; and evaluation of programs.

In 1990, the federal government by presidential initiative established the Rural Development Council. The council is comprised of representatives from the federal, state, local and tribal governments along with private and nonprofit sectors in an effort to promote coordination and cooperation in promoting economic vitality in the rural areas.

SUMMARY:

The Washington State Rural Development Council is formally recognized by the state of Washington. The council is a partnership between state, federal and local governments, tribal governments, and the public and private sectors and is organized as a mutual effort to address the problems facing rural communities, enhance their viability and self-reliance, and look for ways to coordinate and consolidate the efforts of all who serve rural communities.

The council's mission and objectives include: (a) coordinating and applying private, local, state, tribal and federal resources to support the development of viable, self-reliant rural communities according to locally conceived and driven strategies; (b) serving as a forum for communication between members of the rural community; (c) acting as an advocate for change in policy and rules that inhibit the viability of rural communities; (d) serving as a resource developer to maximize knowledge of available resources to assist rural communities; (e) providing a forum for policy analysis concerning existing and proposed rural development strategies in Washington; (f) promoting coordination and cooperation between all levels of government and private, public and nonprofit groups in order to promote rural economic vitality; (g) promoting the establishment of rural/urban linkage partnerships that will be mutually beneficial in alleviating the distress of rapid economic growth, or decline, and promoting economic vitality; (h) identifying and addressing federal, state, and local administrative barriers that hinder economic vitality; (i) providing policy analysis on existing and proposed development strategies for tribes in Washington; and (j) identifying and providing opportunities to educate and inform state, federal, local, and local policy and program staff as to the needs of rural Washington.

The council is located in either a federal or state agency as determined by the council.

The costs incurred by the council are to be limited to the amounts appropriated by the state and federal governments along with membership fees and grants from public and private sources.

The council is scheduled to terminate under the sunset evaluation process on June 30, 1998.

An appropriation of \$49,500 is provided to the Rural Development Council from the general fund.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SECOND SUBSTITUTE:

The Rural Development Council originated as a federal program and its constituent members in the state of Washington include various local governments functioning as equal partners with the state government.

Appropriation: \$49,500

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Formal recognition by the state as well as state participation as one member among equals should strengthen the Rural Development Council and improve the service it provides to rural communities.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Mike Fitzgerald, DTED; Kurt Danison, Washington State Rural Development Council Local Government Representative; Doug Hayden, Washington State Rural Development Council Nonprofit Representative