

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5403

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES, FEBRUARY 3, 1994

Brief Description: Authorizing public utility districts to fluoridate water supplies.

SPONSORS: Senators Haugen, Oke and Deccio

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5403 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chairman; Ludwig, Vice Chairman; Hochstatter, Owen, A. Smith, Vognild and Williams.

Minority Report: Do not pass and do not substitute.

Signed by Senators Amondson, Roach and West.

Staff: Jeff Baird (786-7444)

Hearing Dates: February 8, 1993; February 11, 1993; March 3, 1993; January 26, 1994; February 3, 1994

BACKGROUND:

Counties, cities, and towns are considered to have the authority to fluoridate their water supply systems under the general grant of police and sanitation powers in the Washington State Constitution, Article 11, section 11, and pursuant statutes.

Districts other than counties, cities, and towns are not addressed in the State Constitution and must have an express grant of authority to fluoridate their water supply systems.

Water districts are authorized to fluoridate their water supply systems upon a majority vote of their commissioners. Alternatively, the commissioners may submit the proposition to the electors of the water district.

Public utility districts do not have the authority to fluoridate their water supply systems.

SUMMARY:

Public utility districts have the same power to fluoridate their water supply systems as water districts now have. A majority of the commissioners may authorize fluoridation or the commissioners may submit the proposition to the electors of the public utility district. The proposition must receive a majority vote to become effective.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SECOND SUBSTITUTE:

When a proposition is submitted to the electors, cross precinct advisory ballots are available to persons who receive water service from the district but who are not otherwise electors. This section only applies to districts where the PUD has sole control over the water.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Public utility districts need formal statutory parity with other municipal corporations to fluoridate their water. The bill is procedural and does not in itself bring about any fluoridation. Fluoridation significantly reduces tooth decay in populations using treated water supplies.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Fluoride harms adult bones and soft tissue. At best, it only delays cavities in children. Persons who choose to use fluoride can purchase it now, individually, making fluoridation of water supplies unnecessary.

TESTIFIED: David Michener, WA State Dental Association (pro); Dave Arbaugh, WA PUD Association (pro); Dr. Roy E. Hanford, Safe Water (con)