

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5447

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 9, 1993

Brief Description: Modifying review of solid waste collection company tariff filings.

SPONSORS: Senator Fraser; by request of Utilities & Transportation Commission

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chairman; Barr, Deccio, McCaslin, Sutherland, and Talmadge.

Staff: Gary Wilburn (786-7453)

Hearing Dates: February 10, 1993; February 17, 1993

BACKGROUND:

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) is charged with regulating the service and rates charged by solid waste collection companies in unincorporated areas and in cities and towns where the local government elects to have UTC exercise jurisdiction. Under current law, the collection company must provide 30 days notice to the UTC and the public prior to changing its rates. The UTC may suspend the rate change for a period of up to seven months pending the UTC review of reasonableness and any public hearing which the UTC may decide to hold.

Since the passage of major legislation on solid waste collection and recycling in 1989, the number and complexity of UTC rate reviews have increased substantially. That legislation also provided significant new authority of local governments to determine the level of solid waste and recycling services that the collection company must meet, and the UTC obtains the comments of local governments in its rate reviews.

Where a rate review may not be completed within the 30-day period, the only alternative to obtain additional time for review is to exercise UTC's authority to suspend the rate. Additionally, UTC staff have found that in some complicated rate cases, generally involving a new type of recycling service where operating costs are not fully known, the seven-month maximum suspension period may not be sufficient time for UTC to complete its rate review.

SUMMARY:

The advance notice required to the public and the UTC by a solid waste collection company of a proposed rate change is extended from 30 to 45 days. The maximum period the UTC may suspend a proposed rate is increased from seven months to ten months.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Allows county officials, rate payers and others additional time to comment on proposed rate changes, and for UTC staff to review the proposals.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Eugene Eckhardt, UTC (pro); Gordon Walgren, Washington Refuse and Recycling (pro)