

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5555

AS OF FEBRUARY 16, 1993

Brief Description: Giving the federal environmental protection agency primary responsibility for regulation of the safe drinking water act.

SPONSORS: Senators Williams and M. Rasmussen

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Staff: Cathy Baker (786-7708)

Hearing Dates: February 17, 1993

BACKGROUND:

In 1974, Congress enacted the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The SDWA established a legal framework to protect the public from a wide variety of contaminants in drinking water. The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for the administration of the federal SDWA. However, much of the implementation and enforcement of the law is intended to occur at the state level. The EPA has formally delegated primary responsibility for the federal SDWA in Washington to the state Department of Health.

Amendments to the federal SDWA in 1986 created many new responsibilities for the state. Among other requirements, the 1986 amendments to the federal law increase the number of contaminants to be monitored, prescribe maximum contaminant levels for 83 specified contaminants, require disinfection of all water supplies, specify filtration for surface water supplies, establish requirements for the protection of groundwater, and define treatment techniques for some regulated contaminants.

In 1989 the Legislature adopted the Washington State Safe Drinking Water Act. Under the state law, the Department of Health is directed to administer a drinking water program which includes those elements necessary for the state to assume primary enforcement responsibility for requirements in the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. In order to have primary responsibility, the Department of Health must adopt regulations at least as stringent as EPA's.

Under existing state law, there are also provisions authorizing the Department of Ecology and the Department of Natural Resources to participate in and administer state programs for implementation of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

SUMMARY:

New language is added in the parts of the statute which authorize state agencies to participate in implementation of the federal safe drinking water laws. The language states that the federal Environmental Protection Agency has primary responsibility for regulation of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available