

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 5673**

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES, MARCH 2, 1993**

**Brief Description:** Providing for the creation of telecommuting work centers.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Erwin, M. Rasmussen and Skratek

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chairman; Amondson, Hochstatter, McCaslin, Owen, Vognild, West, and Williams.

**Staff:** Phil Moeller (786-7445)

**Hearing Dates:** March 2, 1993

**BACKGROUND:**

The concept of "telecommuting" involves certain types of workers using information technologies and working either in a home office or in a conveniently located office instead of their usual workplace. Generally telecommuting has been used as an option for workers part of the time, such as once or twice a week, but can also involve permanent relocation of some workers. It is particularly well suited for people whose employment focuses on information services. Benefits include reduced vehicle congestion and worker flexibility.

Several corporate and governmental entities have expressed interest in promoting telecommuting. Although several pilot projects on telecommuting have been conducted, some groups contend that governmental entities must lead the way on this concept before it becomes generally accepted as an employment option.

**SUMMARY:**

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is directed to survey state office facilities and develop an inventory of unused office space that could be used for telecommuting and assess the amount of office space that could be saved with the extensive use of telecommuting. Ecology is directed to establish at least one telecommuting work center for use by state agencies by July 1, 1994. Unused space may be used by local and federal government agencies. When completing these projects, Ecology shall consult with the Washington State Energy Office (WSEO) and the Department of Information Services.

Ecology shall report to the Legislature by January 1, 1994, on the feasibility of locating a state office facility with at least 50 employees in a distressed area using telecommuting technologies.

WSEO shall establish a telecommuting technical assistance program to assist government agencies and private sector businesses seeking to implement telecommuting programs.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:**

The definitions section is changed with the effect of designating the Department of General Administration as the lead agency instead of the Department of Ecology.

**Appropriation:** \$150,000 to the Department of General Administration from the air pollution control account; \$50,000 to the Washington State Energy Office from the air pollution control account.

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested February 25, 1993

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

This concept has the potential to greatly reduce congestion. This bill would get us started in the right direction.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Senator Erwin, prime sponsor