

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSJM 8003

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 9, 1994

Brief Description: Soliciting the continued partnership between federal agencies and the Washington State Rural Development Council.

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRADE, TECHNOLOGY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Joint Memorial No. 8003 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute joint memorial 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 23, 1993; January 20, 1994; January 26, 1994

BACKGROUND:

During the decade of the '80s and into the early '90s, 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 compared 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 state Legislature recognizes Washington was selected to be a pilot project state under the President's 1990 Initiative on Rural Development. The initiative's intent is to promote voluntary and meaningful communication between all levels of government, including federal, state, local and tribal along with the private and nonprofit sectors to: assist residents of rural communities; mitigate negative impacts affecting rural communities, enhance economic viability and support self-reliance; and to look for ways to coordinate, synchronize, or consolidate policies and programs serving citizens in rural communities.

It is resolved the Washington State Legislature requests Congress establish the Initiative on Rural Development on an ongoing basis and provide other states the opportunity to participate in efforts to enhance the economic viability of rural communities.

The council's specific responsibilities include:

- (1) To promote a forum for policy analysis concerning existing and proposed rural development strategies in Washington;
- (2) To promote coordination and cooperation between all levels of government, including tribal governments, and private, public, and nonprofit groups in order to promote rural economic vitality;
- (3) To facilitate communication between rural communities and organizations and other sectors of the state and nation;
- (4) To promote the establishment of rural-urban partnerships mutually beneficial to both areas in alleviating the distress of rapid economic growth or decline and promoting economic vitality;
- (5) To identify and address federal, state, and local administrative barriers hindering economic vitality;
- (6) To identify and provide opportunities to educate and inform state, federal, and local policy and program staff as to the needs and special development context of rural Washington; and
- (7) To identify ways to promote educational opportunities for citizens in rural communities.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Formal recognition by the state and communication of state participation in and approval of the Rural Development Council should strengthen the service it provides to rural communities.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

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