

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8406

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FEBRUARY 25, 1993

Brief Description: Creating a committee for agricultural housing and benefits.

SPONSORS: Senators M. Rasmussen, Loveland, Barr, Haugen, Winsley, Anderson, Moyer, Prentice, Deccio, Bauer, Spanel, Skratek, Snyder, Franklin and Hochstatter

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators M. Rasmussen, Chairman; Loveland, Vice Chairman; Anderson, Barr, Bauer, Newhouse, and Snyder.

Staff: John Stuhlmiller (786-7446)

Hearing Dates: February 25, 1993

BACKGROUND:

In 1988, the state Board of Health issued a report on the status of farm workers. The report estimated that the state's migrant and seasonal farm worker population, excluding dependents, at 55,000. About 50 percent of this population consisted of farm workers that lived beyond normal commuting distance from the area where they worked.

Concern has been expressed regarding the need for farm worker housing. In 1986, the number of grower-provided housing units for farm workers was estimated at 4,400 while the demand for migrant and seasonal farm workers exceeded 25,000 units.

Additional interest has been expressed in regard to providing farm workers with additional benefits such as health care and day care, as well as a grievance procedure to handle employer-employee disputes.

SUMMARY:

A Committee on Agricultural Housing and Benefits is created composed of 16 members. The members include: (1) the chair and ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee, House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, and the House Commerce and Labor Committee; (2) three representatives of the agricultural community; (3) three representatives of the farm worker community; (4) one representative of the building industry; (5) and a representative of private nonprofit farm worker housing organizations.

The committee is to explore all aspects of the need for adequate farm worker housing, health care benefits, day care, special educational needs, and the appropriateness and need for a grievance board to handle disputes between employees and employers in light of the unique needs of the agricultural industry.

The committee is to report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 31, 1993. The committee is terminated on January 10, 1994.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

The tree fruit industry considers this an appropriate approach to the issue of providing for a workforce which expands and contracts by up to 50,000 workers. A broad study is needed.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Frank DeLong, Washington Horticulture Association (pro); Dick Ducharme, Yakima Valley Growers and Shippers Association (pro); Mike Gempler, Producers Association (pro)