

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1499

As Reported By House Committee On:

Trade & Economic Development

Title: An act relating to a rural development council.

Brief Description: Establishing a rural development council.

Sponsors: Representatives Schoesler, Sheahan, Doumit, Morris, Tokuda, Kessler, Scott and Dickerson; by request of Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Trade & Economic Development: 2/13/97, 2/26/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Van Luven, Chairman; Dunn, Vice Chairman; Voloria, Ranking Minority Member; Sheldon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Ballasiotes; Mason; McDonald and Morris.

Staff: Kenny Pittman (786-7392).

Background: The Rural Development Council is a public-private collaborative effort designed to improve the delivery and accessibility of resources to rural communities. The Rural Development Council is part of a national initiative, the National Rural Development Partnership, that addresses rural economic development, human/social services, physical infrastructure, and environmental conservation issues in a collaborative, strategic and bottom-up fashion.

There are 37 state rural development councils across the country, Washington State Rural Development Council was one of eight pilot councils authorized in 1990. The Washington State Rural Development Council (WSRDC) is staffed by a full-time executive director, and governed by a volunteer executive committee comprised of representatives from the private, nonprofit, and local, state, federal and tribal government sectors.

The council is funded from a federal matching grant that provides 75 percent of the operating funds and remaining funds are provided in grant or in-kind contribution from other non-federal sources. The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development provides administrative and clerical support to the council under its general duties and powers.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The WSRDC is established in statute. The council is governed by an executive council that consists of 11 members appointed by the Governor. The executive committee consists of representatives of business, natural resources, agriculture, environment, economic development, education, health, human services, counties, cities and tribal governments.

The Governor makes appointments of new members to the executive committee for three-year terms as follows: four members are appointed in 1997, four are members appointed in 1998, and three members are appointed in 1999. The members of the executive committee are reimbursed for travel expenses.

The duties of the council include (1) informing the Governor, Legislature, and state and federal agencies on rural community development issues; (2) identifying and recommending improvements to existing resource delivery systems; and (3) serving as a liaison between rural communities and public and private resource providers.

State agencies are encouraged to financially contribute to the council. All federal agencies, state agencies, and statewide associations that make a significant contribution to the council are considered ex officio members.

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development may provide staff support, administrative assistance, and office space to the council. The council expires June 30, 2003.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill revises the travel compensation language, allows state agencies that make a substantial contribution to the rural development council to be voting ex officio members of the executive committee, and removes the July 1, 1997, emergency clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Rural needs and issues are often overshadowed by urban issues. This bill will put the existing WSRDC into statute. The WSRDC will provide

governmental agencies a forum to receive community input on the various issues. The bill will signal that the state is a formal partner in a unique partnership in developing rural policy for the state.

Testimony Against: None

Testified: Ellen Hagey and Wanda Stenzel, Washington State Rural Development Council (pro); Tom DiDomenico, Benton-Franklin Economic Development District (pro); Kurt Danison (pro); Mary McBride, U.S. Department of Agriculture (pro); and Donovan Gray, Network for Local Arts in Washington State (pro).