

ANALYSIS OF HB 1681

*House Agriculture & Ecology Committee
1997*

February 19,

BACKGROUND:

Under state law, the solid waste advisory committee provides advice to the Department of Ecology on solid waste management issues. The committee is limited to 11 members and must include various interest groups. Appointments are made by the director of the Department of Ecology. The committee must meet at least four times per year. Members are entitled to travel reimbursement. One of the committee's duties is to recommend recipients for a governor's environmental excellence award.

Moderate risk waste is waste that is exempted from designation as hazardous waste because it is generated in small quantities. Examples of moderate risk wastes include household cleaners, paints, and solvents.

Counties and cities are required to prepare comprehensive solid waste management plans identifying how waste is to be managed in the planning area. Counties are authorized to assess a fee to recover the planning and administrative costs of preparing a plan. The fee may only be assessed on the unincorporated part of the county. The fee is assessed through the solid waste collection bill.

Governor Lowry directed the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to undertake a study of the future of recycling. A group consisting of state and local governments, private recyclers, waste collectors, labor, environmental and business organizations was convened last year to make recommendations relating to the future of recycling. The group concluded, in part, that the government should continue to take an active role in ensuring that environmentally and economically sound recycling policies are developed and implemented.

SUMMARY:

Legislative findings are made relating to the benefits of waste reduction and recycling. A legislative purpose is stated that waste reduction and recycling should balance the needs of the environment and the economy, regulators and the private sector, and urban areas and rural areas.

The membership and role of the solid waste advisory committee is expanded. The committee may include up to 15 members. The directors of the Departments of Ecology, Community, Trade and Economic Development, and the chair of the Utilities and Transportation Commission, or their designees, serve as ex-officio members. Specific types of industries must be represented, including agriculture, retailers or manufacturers, and commercial composters. Members must have policy expertise on waste management. Members are appointed for 2-year terms by the ex-officio members and may serve up to three terms. The committee must prepare specific annual recommendations to the Governor to develop and improve waste reduction and recycling policies. The committee is encouraged to use pilot projects, grant programs, and other means to evaluate its policy recommendations. The committee is specifically authorized to form technical subcommittees. Terms for appointing and reimbursing subcommittee members are established. A subcommittee member need not be a member of the committee. Staffing is provided by one of the three agencies represented through ex-officio membership. Committee responsibilities relating to the governor's environmental excellence award are terminated.

Counties and cities with an approved solid waste plan are authorized to assess a fee on residential and commercial collection customers. The fee must be clearly identified in the solid waste collection bill provided to the customer. With some exceptions, the fee may be used to implement any portion of an approved local solid waste plan. The fee may be used for specified capital construction costs, such as: cleaning up contaminated landfills, restoring or replacing transfer stations, opening new units of an existing landfill, paying debt service on capital project if the debt was acquired before July 1, 1997. The fee cannot be used to finance the operating costs of a disposal facility or for moderate risk waste activities. The fee can be based on a variety of factors, including weight, volume, flat fee, or a percentage of the collection bill.