

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1499

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Labor, April 1, 1997

Title: An act relating to a rural development council.

Brief Description: Establishing a rural development council.

Sponsors: House Committee on Trade & Economic Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Schoesler, Sheahan, Doumit, Morris, Tokuda, Kessler, Scott and Dickerson; by request of Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 3/20/97, 4/1/97 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Schow, Chair; Horn, Vice Chair; Anderson, Franklin, Fraser, Heavey and Newhouse.

Staff: Patrick Woods (786-7430)

Background: During the decade of the '80s and into the '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 primarily due to the challenges facing natural resource based industries such as timber and fishing, as compared to the significant growth opportunities in aerospace and technology.

In response to this period of rural recession, a series of state programs were established or expanded to specifically address the array of problems facing rural communities. A number of state agencies have responsibilities for administering rural distressed area- programs. In addition, numerous federal and local government agencies along with nonprofit entities actively participate in rural development activities.

In 1990, the federal government established, by presidential initiative, the Rural Development Council, which is comprised of representatives from the federal, state, local and tribal governments, along with private and nonprofit sectors in an effort to promote coordination in rural economic development efforts. Washington was one of the pilot project states in the implementation of this federal initiative.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Washington State Rural Development Council is recognized in state statute. The council is governed by an executive committee made up of 11 members appointed by the Governor that represent the following sectors: business; natural resources; agriculture; environment; economic development; education; health; human

services; counties; cities; and tribal government. The following federal and state agencies are ex-officio, voting members of the council: U.S. Department of Agriculture; State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; and all state and federal agencies and statewide associations that make a significant financial contribution to the Rural Development Council.

The council's mission is to improve the delivery and accessibility of public and private resources to meet the needs of rural communities.

The council is directed to: provide state, local and federal officials with the rural perspective on economic development issues; make recommendations on ways to improve the economic development service delivery system; and serve as a liaison between rural communities and public and private service delivery entities.

Council members are eligible to receive reimbursement for travel expenses. The council is scheduled to terminate on June 30, 2003.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: At least 90 percent of the council's executive committee are required to reside in rural areas of the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: No one.