

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5841

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Energy & Utilities, March 5, 1997

Title: An act relating to regulation of public water systems.

Brief Description: Regulating public water systems.

Sponsors: Senators Hochstatter, Finkbeiner and Winsley; by request of Department of Health.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy & Utilities: 3/3/97, 3/5/97 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5841 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Finkbeiner, Chair; Hochstatter, Vice Chair; Brown, Jacobsen, Rossi and Strannigan.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Background: Over 15,000 water systems operate in the state of Washington. Proportionate to the state's population, Washington has one of the highest numbers of systems in the United States.

Federal requirements imposed through the Safe Drinking Water Act will require water systems to improve monitoring and treatment of drinking water. Some of these requirements are very costly and have the potential to especially burden smaller systems that have fewer consumers to share the cost.

The 1995 Legislature created the Water Supply Advisory Committee to report on the organization, functions, service delivery, and funding of the Department of Health's drinking water program. Also in 1995, the Legislature created a drinking water assistance account to receive any federal funds that would be appropriated by Congress for improving drinking water systems.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Department of Health (DOH), the Public Works Board, and the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED) are directed to establish a program to use moneys in the drinking water assistance account to provide assistance to public water systems.

In consultation with interested agencies and entities, DOH is directed to establish guidelines for grants, loans or other financial assistance. The Public Works Board is directed to develop a financial assistance program for public water systems using appropriated funds. Disbursements to eligible water systems are to begin no later than October 1, 1997.

DOH is directed to implement a voluntary consolidated source monitoring program to characterize the source water quality of the state's drinking water supplies.

Certified operators of Group A systems are required to conform to federal law or implementing rules or guidelines.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill contained language that amended the requirements pertaining to water source on the residential real estate sale disclosure form.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 25, 1997.

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

Testimony For: This bill directs the appropriate agencies to develop the required program and procedures that allow federal funds to be spent on upgrading water systems in the state. It will help assure that drinking water systems are improved.

Testimony Against: The bill should not deal with the residential real estate disclosure form.

Testified: Skip Richards, Water Supply Advisory Committee (pro); Dave Clark, DOH (pro); Pete Butkus, CTED; Gwen Hudson, Realtors (con).