

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6160

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As Passed Senate, February 12, 1998

**Title:** An act relating to eliminating authority for reclamation districts over one million acres.

**Brief Description:** Repealing the authority for reclamation districts over one million acres.

**Sponsors:** Senators Morton and Rasmussen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture & Environment: 1/14/98, 1/20/98 [DP].  
Passed Senate, 2/12/98, 43-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Morton, Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Fraser, McAuliffe, Newhouse, Oke and Rasmussen.

**Staff:** Bob Lee (786-7404)

**Background:** Senate Bill 232 was enacted in 1927 and established the statutory framework for the formation and operation of irrigation districts of over 1 million acres in size. The statute is codified as Chapter 89.30 RCW, is 28 pages in length and consists of over 271 separate sections. This chapter of law has not been utilized and no irrigation districts over 1 million acres have been formed during in the intervening 70 years.

It is speculated that this chapter was enacted with the development of the Columbia Basin Project in mind. The purpose of Chapter 89.30 RCW was to facilitate bringing irrigation to tracts of arid land that exceed 1 million acres. Subsequent to passage of the act, the Bureau of Reclamation developed the Columbia Basin Project and three irrigation districts were formed and currently operate under other state statutes. Repeal of Chapter 89.30 RCW would not affect existing irrigation district operations in the Columbia Basin or elsewhere.

Chapter 87.03 RCW is the most commonly used chapter and contains general provisions relating to irrigation districts. In this chapter, there are specific provisions for irrigation districts over 200,000 acres and others that apply to irrigation districts under 200,000 acres. The three major irrigation districts in the Columbia Basin Project are those that are governed by the provisions that apply to districts over 200,000 acres. Repeal of Chapter 89.30 RCW would not affect Chapter 87.03 RCW.

Chapter 87.03 RCW is frequently amended and efforts are made to keep this statute current. By contrast, Chapter 89.30 RCW has not been subject to many amendments and seldom have there been efforts to keep this chapter current. There are vast differences between existing laws governing the operations of existing irrigation districts and Chapter 89.30 RCW. There are no provisions that allow the merging of various smaller districts into a

district of over 1 million acres. Therefore, Chapter 89.30 RCW could not be utilized without major updating and reformulation. Joint operation of irrigation district operations was authorized in a separate statute during the 1996 session.

**Summary of Bill:** The unused statute, Chapter 89.30 RCW, is repealed. Other irrigation district and joint boards of control laws are not affected.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** No one.