

House Bill Analysis

HB 2939

HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND ECOLOGY COMMITTEE

February
3, 2000

- Provides incentives for increased recycling.
--

BACKGROUND:

The legislature adopted the Waste Not Washington Act in 1989 (ESHB 1671). The top priorities in the act are established as waste reduction and recycling of source-separated materials. The law also sets a goal of recycling 50 percent of the municipal solid waste stream by 1995. That goal has not been achieved. The recycling rate reached a high of 36 percent in 1996, but dropped down to 32.4 percent the following year.

Several reasons have been offered for the drop in the recycling rate: increased waste generation, poor Pacific Rim markets for recycled materials, a drop in recycling participation by waste generators, and lost funding for education programs. The Recycling Assessment Panel was convened by the Department of Ecology in September 1999 to further assess the reasons for the drop in recycling, and to examine and recommend ways to increase recycling. The Panel included members of the Legislature, citizens, the Department of Ecology representatives of local government, and recyclers. The Panel provided a set of recommendations in December 1999.

One of the recommendations offered before the Panel involves allowing solid waste collection companies to retain a percentage of the revenue they receive from the sale of recyclable materials to encourage growth in recycling. At present, companies are required by the Utilities and Transportation Commission to return all of the revenue back to their customers.

SUMMARY:

The Utilities and Transportation Commission is directed to allow solid waste collection companies to retain 30 percent of the revenue they receive from the sale of recyclable materials, if the companies have submitted a plan to the commission. The remaining 70 percent is to be passed on to residential customers.

By December, 2003, the commission is directed to provide a report to the legislature that evaluates: (1) the effectiveness of revenue sharing to increase recycling in the state, and (2) the effect of revenue sharing on costs to customers.

The deadline for achieving the state's goal of a 50 percent recycling rate is changed from 1995 to 2005.

In addition to the elements that city and county solid waste management plans must already include, the plans must also consider residential rate structures that provide economic incentives for customers to reduce their level of solid waste collection and to increase recycling.

Starting in 2002, the Department of Ecology is required to evaluate the amount of construction, demolition, and land clearing waste; manure; and major food processing waste that is included in the solid waste stream.

The Department of General Administration is required to develop goals for state use of recycled and environmentally preferred products.