

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5101

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, March 3, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to avoiding farmland conversion.

**Brief Description:** Avoiding farmland conversion.

**Sponsors:** Senators Haugen and Rasmussen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 3/3/99 [DPS, DNPS]

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5101 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Gardner, Morton, Prentice and Swecker.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senators Honeyford and Stevens.

**Staff:** David Johnson (786-7754)

**Background:** The amount of land available for farming has been decreasing as the state's population has grown. Concern exists that this decrease in available farming land will harm the state's economy. It is hoped that awareness and adjustment of state actions which threaten available farmland may help lessen this harm.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** State agencies must identify and attempt to mitigate or avoid adverse effects on some farmland caused by their programs, using criteria developed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Agencies may use the NRCS for assistance in identifying key farmland and assuring their programs comply with protection policies. The requirements are limited to state programs and do not affect the use of non-state land.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The substitute bill removed the requirement that the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development identify land and coordinate efforts. It added private property right protections.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 14, 1999.

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

**Testimony For:** Without effort to save farmland, there will not be any left. There is a great need to make farmland preservation a priority because many competing pressures on farmland are taking it over.

**Testimony Against:** This could harm state investments and efforts to acquire land for other purposes. It could increase costs.

**Testified:** Mike Ryherd, 1000 Friends of WA (pro); Shane Hope, CTED (neutral).