

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5674

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Ecology

Title: An act relating to potential climate change.

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington climate center.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Environment, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Constantine, Jacobsen, Prentice, Fraser and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 3/27/01, 3/29/01 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Establishes the joint select committee on climate change to study the potential effects of climate change and the potential impacts of state action on the state's competitive position with respect to other states.
- Requires the joint select committee to submit interim findings by December 31, 2001, and final recommendations by June 30, 2002.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 11 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Mielke, Republican Vice Chair; B. Chandler, Delvin, Dunshee, Grant, Hunt, Quall and Sump.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Kirby, Roach and Schoesler.

Staff: Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

Background:

A federal law, the Global Change Research Act of 1990, established the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) and directed federal research agencies to coordinate a comprehensive national research program to study human-induced and natural processes of global change. The 1990 federal law also required the USGCRP to submit to Congress a national assessment to include and evaluate:

- the USGCRP's findings and scientific uncertainties associated with these findings;
- global change effects on a variety of societal and environmental factors, including the natural environment, agriculture, energy production and use, land use and water resources, transportation, human health and welfare, human social systems, and biological diversity; and
- current global change trends, human-induced and natural, and projected major trends for the next 25-100 years.

A major component of the national assessment are regional analyses involving workshops and assessments regarding potential consequences of climate change in a particular region. In 1997 a workshop was conducted for the Pacific Northwest Region or PNW (i.e., Washington, Oregon and Idaho). The PNW assessment is one of 18 regional assessments being conducted as part of the national assessment. The PNW assessment is to focus on the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of climate change, including issues such as forestry, water, marine ecosystems, coasts, agriculture and health.

The PNW assessment includes a report from the Climate Impacts Group (CIG), which is a group of scientist and policy analysts at the University of Washington. The CIG report, titled the "Impacts of Climate Change -- Pacific Northwest," identifies some climate change impacts, describes the modeling process for projecting climate change trends, and provides some general recommendations for future study or action.

Summary of Amended Bill:

A joint select committee on climate change is established. The joint select committee is required to study and make recommendations on the potential: (1) impacts of climate change in the state; and (2) effects of early action by the state, before action by the federal government or other states, on the state's competitive position with respect to other states.

The joint select committee is composed of 15 members, including:

- four legislative members, with one member from each of the two major political parties in the House of Representatives and the Senate;

- two members from the environmental community;
- two members from the agriculture industry;
- two members from the business community; and
- one member from each of the following -- timber industry, county government, city government, irrigation districts, and municipal water purveyors.

The legislative members of the Senate and the House of Representatives are to be appointed by the President of the Senate and the Co-Speakers of the House of Representatives, respectively. The nonlegislative members are to be appointed by the President of the Senate and the Co-Speakers of the House of Representatives. The co-chairs are to be legislative members from different political parties elected by the joint select committee. Procedural provisions are included regarding committee meetings, staffing, and operation.

The joint select committee is required to report to the Legislature its interim findings by December 31, 2001, and its final recommendations by June 30, 2002. The joint select committee expires on July 1, 2002.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The substitute eliminates provisions: (1) authorizing the establishment of the Washington Climate Center (Center) as an independent, nonprofit organization to serve as a central clearinghouse for all climate change activities in the state; (2) specifying procedural, funding, governance, and reporting provisions for the Center; (3) listing the duties of the Center; (4) encouraging emitters of greenhouse gases to mitigate emissions; and (5) requiring the center to publicize successful mitigation projects and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill gives legislative approval to the Washington Climate Center (center) and requires no state funding. The center does not have regulatory authority; its purpose is to advise citizens and businesses, collect information, and report to the Legislature. Climate change is the most significant environmental issue we face, and the effects of global warming are broad and significant. This issue is not being addressed at

the federal level, and the failure to take action will produce long-term negative effects for this state. This bill will provide for a comprehensive look at data and the potential impacts of climate change in the Northwest and will create a resource for climate change information.

Testimony Against: This legislation is not needed for a private sector, privately funded center. The scientific community is very divided regarding the causes of climate change. Climate change is an international issue and must be addressed at the federal level.

Testified: (In support) Senator Constantine, prime sponsor; Mark Foutch, Mayor Pro Tem, city of Olympia; David Sjoding, Washington State University Energy Program; Dr. Richard Gammon, University of Washington; Dr. Phillip Mote, University of Washington; Blair Henry, Northwest Council on Climate Change; Terry Nyman, Former Director of Regional Air Pollution Agency; Toni Potter, Seattle Audubon Society; Joe Heineck, Heineck Associates; Sue Minahan; J. Artie Browning; Paul Horton; Climate Solutions; Tim Newcomb, former Seattle City Light; Reverend Monica Myers, Washington Association of Churches; and Linda VerNuuy, Northwest Council on Climate Change.

(In opposition) Grant Nelson, Association of Washington Business.