

Agriculture & Ecology Committee

HB 1921

Brief Description: *Establishing the Washington climate center.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Linville, Kagi, Ruderman, Simpson, Dunshee, Murray and Veloria.*

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Authorizes the establishment of the Washington Climate Center (Center) as an independent, nonprofit organization to serve as a central clearinghouse for climate change activities and to perform specified duties related to climate change research and activities.*
- *Establishes an 11-member board for the Center, including legislative and other members.*
- *Specifies the Center is to be funded through grants and contributions.*
- *Encourages greenhouse gas emitters from electricity and transportation fuel sources to mitigate emissions effective January 1, 2002.*

Hearing Date: *2/22/01*

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 JISAO 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. The House Agriculture and Ecology Committee recently held a work session on the potential regional effects of climate change.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature authorizes the establishment of the Washington Climate Center (Center). An independent, nonprofit organization, the Center is to serve as a central clearinghouse for all climate change activities in the state. The Center is required to adopt and publish rules of operation, calculations and methods and to provide a report by December 31st of each year to the Governor and the Legislature regarding its operations and the status of greenhouse gas emissions. The Center is to be funded through grants and voluntary cash and in-kind contributions.

The Center also must, within available funds, identify the key sectors likely to be adversely affected by climate change, convene meetings of these sectors' key members, provide scientific and technological information, support a collaborative response, and assist in effective contingency planning for those sectors. The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, Department of Ecology, Department of Transportation, and the Washington State University energy program are required to work with the Center to establish contingency planning for the key sectors.

Other duties of the Center may include:

- determining current and projected emissions of greenhouse gases in the state;*
- collecting and sharing scientific and technological data related to climate change;*
- assisting and collecting all climate contingency planning in the state;*
- advising relevant sectors of prospective commercial opportunities;*

- certifying the extent and degree of mitigation projects;
- developing adequate methods for monitoring and verification of mitigation projects; and
- serving as a central, independent registry for trading of emissions credits.

In addition, the Center also may study and make recommendations by:

- January 1, 2002, on the most cost-effective methods for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector consistent with federal law;
- January 30, 2002, on avenues for capping the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the state by December 31, 2003; and
- June 30, 2002, on the most cost-effective methods for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the state by December 31, 2020.

The Center is to be governed by an 11-member board of directors appointed by the Governor, including: (1) one member from each major party of the Senate and the House of Representatives recommended by their leadership; (2) one member from the Office of Commissioner of Public Lands; (3) two members from the nonprofit, climate sector; (4) two members from the business sector; and (4) two members from the climate academic sector. The Center's board members are to serve four-year terms and may retain staff as needed. A majority vote of board members binds the Center's board.

Emitters of greenhouse gases from electricity production and transportation fuel burning are encouraged to mitigate emissions effective January 1, 2002. Emissions of greenhouse gases from all other sectors are exempt. "Greenhouse gases" are defined to include only carbon dioxide, methane and natural gas, and nitrous oxide and to exclude carbon neutral emissions. Emitters also are encouraged to secure their own mitigation projects within the state or request the Center's assistance in selecting these mitigation projects. The Center may upon request and with adequate funding determine and certify the amount of mitigation accomplished by any mitigation project and determine whether and what monitoring and verification should be required for any project. The Center must publicize successful mitigation projects and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Definitions are added to clarify provisions relating to the Center and to the emitters of greenhouse gases. Legislative findings are made regarding the potential effects of climate change from greenhouse gas emissions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.