

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1921

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Ecology

Title: An act relating to greenhouse gases affecting climate change.

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington climate center.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 2/22/01, 2/26/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- 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.
- Includes composition, governance, staffing, and operations provisions for the joint select committee.
- 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: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 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, Kirby, Quall, Roach, Schoesler and Sump.

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.

Major components 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. A report for the PNW assessment from the JISAO Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington 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 Substitute 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. Co-chairs are 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original 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 responsibilities of and study issues for the center; (4) encouraging emitters of greenhouse gases from electricity production and transportation fuel burning to mitigate emissions effective January 1, 2002, and to secure their own mitigation projects within the state or request the center's assistance in selecting these mitigation projects; (5) allowing the center to determine and certify the amount of mitigation accomplished by any mitigation project; and (6) requiring the center to publicize successful mitigation projects and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 26, 2001.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) This is a climate preparedness bill. We are on the brink of an economic and health disaster that is entirely preventable. Global warming is one of the worst threats to public health. Even critics of global warming are now admitting a problem exists. Other states are taking action on this issue. The bill will acknowledge this problem is real and promote an education process.

The bill will approve the establishment of a forum to discuss climate change issues,

collect and review data, and make recommendations to the Legislature. This bill also will allow the state to get some experience and take some action so the marketplace will have time to react. This bill does not require funding from the Legislature; it provides a free report on climate change to the Legislature every year from scientists in this area.

Testimony Against: (Original bill) There is no consensus on global warming. Conflicting scientific evidence exists regarding the potential effects. It is premature to pass this bill.

The global warming issue can best be handled at the federal level. The Legislature must consider the impact on Washington if it acts alone -- this may produce competitive disadvantages with no beneficial result. The state should wait for federal action on this issue.

Testified: (In support) former Representative Mary Lux; Donna Ewing, League of Women Voters; L.B. Sandy Rock, public health physician; Blair Henry, U.S. National Assessment Climate Change; Joe Heineck, N.W. Council on Climate Change; Mike Ruby; and Paul Horton, Climate Solutions.

(Opposed) Linda Johnson, Washington Farm Bureau; and Dan Coyne, Washington State Council of Farmer Cooperatives.