

Appropriations Committee

HB 2258

Brief Description: Funding drought and earthquake emergency relief.

Sponsors: Representatives H. Sommers and Sehlin.

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Appropriates \$20 million dollars from the Emergency Reserve Fund for the 2001-03 biennium for deposit in the Nisqually Earthquake Account in response to the Nisqually earthquake emergency.*
- *Appropriates \$5 million dollars from the Emergency Reserve Fund for the 2001-03 biennium for deposit in the State Drought Preparedness Account in response to the statewide drought emergency.*

Hearing Date: 4/26/01

Staff: Patricia Linehan (786-7178).

Background:

In response to the Nisqually earthquake of February 28, 2001, Governor Locke instructed the Military's Emergency Management Division to coordinate all earthquake related assistance to affected areas. President Bush declared Washington a major disaster area, triggering the release of federal funds to supplement recovery efforts in the state.

On March 14, 2001, Governor Locke declared a statewide drought emergency. Declaration of a drought requires that the water supply is below 75 percent of normal and the water shortage is likely to create undue hardships for various water uses and users.

To alleviate hardships and reduce burdens on various water uses and users, the Department of Ecology is given emergency power in response to drought conditions. The department may take the following emergency actions: 1) Issue emergency permits for water; 2) approve temporary transfer of water rights; 3) provide funding assistance to

public agencies to alleviate drought conditions; and 4) take other actions depending on future developments.

The Emergency Reserve Fund consists of general fund revenues in excess of the state expenditure limit. This fund is in the state treasury and is subject to appropriation. The Legislature may appropriate moneys from this fund only with approval of at least two-thirds of the members of each house of the Legislature, and only if the appropriation does not cause total expenditures to exceed the limit.

Summary of Bill:

\$20 million dollars is appropriated from the Emergency Reserve Fund for deposit into the Nisqually Earthquake Account for costs associated with the Nisqually earthquake.

\$5 million dollars is appropriated from the Emergency Reserve Fund for deposit into the State Drought Preparedness Account for costs associated with the statewide drought emergency.

Appropriation: *The sum of \$25 million is appropriated from the Emergency Reserve Fund.*

Fiscal Note: *Not requested.*

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