

***Agriculture & Ecology Committee***

***ESSB 5674***

***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 Summary of Engrossed Substitute 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 a 15-member board for the Center, including legislative and other members.*
- *Specifies the Center is to be funded through grants and voluntary contributions.*
- *Encourages greenhouse gas emitters to mitigate emissions.*

***Hearing Date:*** *3/27/01.*

***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 held a work session early in the legislative 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: (1) identify the key sectors likely to be adversely affected by climate change; (2) examine and report the feasibility of a carbon storage program through comparisons with programs in this state and other states and analysis of methods to increase appropriate storage activities; (3) convene meetings of these sectors' key members; (4) provide scientific and technological information to the public and key sectors; (5) support a collaborative response; and (6) assist in effective contingency planning for those sectors. The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, Department of Ecology, Department of Transportation, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, and the Washington State University energy program are required to work with the Center to establish contingency planning for the key sectors.*

*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;*
- *studying and recommending avenues for reducing short-term and long-term greenhouse gas emissions in the state;*
- *studying and recommending the most cost-effective methods for reducing all net greenhouse gas emissions in the state, considering absorption of greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration;*
- *certifying the extent and degree of any mitigation projects;*
- *developing adequate methods for monitoring and verification of mitigation projects; and*
- *serving as a central, independent registry for trading of emissions credits, if any.*

*The Center is to be governed by an 15-member board of directors (Board) appointed by the Governor for four-year terms. The Board members include: (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) one member from the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, energy policy group; (4) one member from the Washington State University energy program; (5) three members from the nonprofit, climate sector; (4) three members from the business sector; and (4) two members from the climate academic sector, one representing the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group. A majority vote of Board members binds the Board.*

*The Board may establish task forces and technical advisory committees, including a variety of interest groups, as needed to assist with its duties. The Washington State University energy program and the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group may provide technical assistance and research for the Center.*

*Emitters of greenhouse gases are encouraged to seek mitigation of emissions. "Greenhouse gases" are defined to include carbon dioxide, methane and natural gas, and nitrous oxide. 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: (1) assist any emitter in selecting mitigation projects; (2) determine and certify the amount of mitigation accomplished by any mitigation project; and (3) determine what monitoring and verification standards would be useful in evaluating a mitigation 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:*** *Requested on March 16, 2001.*

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