
Agriculture & Ecology Committee

ESSB 6619

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington climate and rural energy development center.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Environment, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Poulsen, Jacobsen, Fraser, Morton, Regala and Kline).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the establishment of the Washington Climate and Rural Energy Development Center in the Washington State University energy program to serve as a central, non-regulatory, source of credible information and services to address climate change and clean energy activities.

Hearing Date: 2/26/02

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

In 1990 the U.S. Congress passed the Global Change Research Act, establishing the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) and directing 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 Bill:

The Washington Climate and Rural Energy Development Center (the center) is created in the Washington State University energy program. The center is to serve as a central, non-regulatory, public source of credible information and services to address climate change and clean energy activities.

The center is assigned numerous duties. These duties include identifying key sectors that are likely to be affected by climate change, examining the feasibility of a carbon storage program, collecting scientific and technical data on climate change, and studying the effects of state action before federal action on Washington's competitive position with respect to other states.

The center must establish task forces and technical advisory committees, and the Legislature may appoint an oversight committee.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested. .

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