

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1395

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Economic Development & Telecommunications, February 26, 2002

Title: An act relating to job retention in rural counties.

Brief Description: Encouraging retention and enhancement of the job base in rural counties.

Sponsors: House Committee on Local Government & Housing (originally sponsored by Representatives Eickmeyer, Buck, Sump, Doumit, Kessler, Jackley, Van Luven, Haigh, Dunn, Murray, Edwards, Veloria, Romero, Hatfield, Pennington, Hunt, Ruderman, Linville, O'Brien, Conway and Santos).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Economic Development & Telecommunications: 2/22/02, 2/26/02 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators T. Sheldon, Chair; B. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, McCaslin, Rossi and Stevens.

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7486)

Background: The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires a county and its cities to plan in accordance with the act if the county meets certain population and growth criteria. A county which does not meet those criteria may choose to plan under the GMA. Currently 29 of the 39 counties in Washington, either by choice or mandate, are planning under the GMA.

Municipalities planning under the GMA must adopt comprehensive plans composed of six required elements. The rural element is to include lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mining resources. The rural element must also provide measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural character of the area as established by the county.

When defining its "rural character," the county must consider land use and development patterns that:

- foster traditional rural lifestyles and rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in a rural community;
- provide for traditional visual landscapes and open spaces in which the vegetation and natural landscapes predominate over the built environment;

- are compatible with wildlife and fish populations, as well as the protection of natural surface and ground water; and
- reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

Summary of Bill: Rural counties planning under the GMA may allow the expansion of small-scale businesses and/or the utilization of an existing business site to locate a new small-scale business if these businesses conform with the rural character of the area as defined by the local government.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill is the result of three years of listening to small businesses in this state. The strict interpretation of the GMA by the Growth Management Hearings Boards has stifled economic development in rural areas. We think this is a necessary change which will help rural communities.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Eickmeyer, prime sponsor; Larry Stout, Realtors; Pam Parker, WSAC.