

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2326

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Environment, Energy & Water, March 1, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to the Washington climate and rural energy development center.

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

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology (originally sponsored by Representatives Linville, Romero, Lantz, Rockefeller, Cooper, Hunt, Simpson, Kagi and Ruderman).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Environment, Energy & Water: 2/28/02, 3/1/02 [DP, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & WATER

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Eide, Jacobsen and Keiser.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hale, Honeyford, McDonald and Morton.

**Staff:** Andrea McNamara (786-7483)

**Background:** The study of climate impacts investigates how climate, natural resources, and socioeconomic systems affect one another. While a number of efforts are underway to determine the likely effects of climate change on Washington's water supply, agriculture, natural resources, coastal infrastructure and public health, there is currently no centralized location for this research or formal collaboration among the researchers.

Climate scientists generally agree that humans are changing the climate through the addition of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The combustion of coal, oil and gas is generally viewed as the most significant human activity that contributes to global warming and climate change. According to a recent report commissioned by a number of the region's utilities and economic development agencies, the Pacific Northwest is poised for global leadership in the clean energy technology industry. The clean energy industry has already emerged as a \$1.4 billion business in the Northwest, and growth is expected to top \$4 billion a year and create 12,000 jobs over the next 20 years without any additional government intervention or support.

**Summary of Bill:** The establishment of the Washington Climate and Rural Energy Development Center (the Center) is authorized to serve as a central, non-regulatory clearinghouse for climate change and clean energy activities in the state.

The Center is established within the Washington State University Energy Program (WSU Energy Program) and is funded through grants, voluntary monetary and in-kind contributions.

The duties of the Center are outlined and include a variety of studies, data collection, and analysis. Specifically, the Center may:

- collect and share scientific and technological data related to climate change;
- collect and share information that could be used, on a voluntary basis, to respond to potential impacts;
- collect and share information about clean energy activities in the rural areas, and advise relevant sectors of prospective commercial activities;
- study and advise the Legislature on the potential impacts of climate change and the effects of early actions by the state, before action by the federal government or other state governments on the state's competitive position;
- research and provide information about mitigation projects;
- accomplish other duties assigned by the Legislature, and provide an annual report to the Governor and Legislature.

Within available funds, the Center must also:

- identify key sectors within the state likely to be adversely affected by climate change;
- examine and report on the feasibility of a carbon storage program for the state; and
- publicize mitigation projects that include evaluations of whether those efforts were deemed successful.

Several state agencies and programs must assist the Center in its duties, including the Departments of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; Ecology; Transportation; Health; Fish and Wildlife; Agriculture; Natural Resources; and the WSU Energy Program. The Center must also establish task forces and technical advisory groups as necessary to assist in its duties. The Legislature may establish a legislative oversight committee consisting of one member from each legislative caucus.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on February 21, 2001.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2002.

**Testimony For:** WSU is already providing a great deal of technical information to state, regional, and national programs, some of which deal with global climate change. The Center will be an excellent resource of information and education for both urban and rural business and citizens who want to help prepare for and mitigate climate change impacts in Washington State.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Jake Fey, WSU Energy Program; Donna Ewing, League of Women Voters.  
NEUTRAL: Grant Nelson, AWB.

