

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5949

As Passed Senate, February 18, 2002

Title: An act relating to erecting and maintaining motorist information sign panels.

Brief Description: Erecting and maintaining motorist information sign panels.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen and Swecker).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/21/01, 3/8/01 [DPS]; 1/21/02 [DP2S].
Passed Senate: 2/18/02, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5949 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Benton, Finkbeiner, Horn, Kastama, McAuliffe, Oke, Shin and Swecker.

Staff: Janice Baumgardt (786-7319)

Background: The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is authorized to erect and maintain motorist information signs within the right of way of the highway system to provide the traveling public with information regarding gas, food, lodging, and tourist-oriented businesses available at or near an interchange. The WSDOT is also authorized to erect and maintain motorist information signs on noninterstate highways for businesses accessible by highways intersecting the noninterstate highway.

The WSDOT must charge reasonable fees to defray the cost of installation and maintenance of motorist information signs.

Summary of Bill: The WSDOT may contract with a private contractor to erect and maintain motorist information signs. The contractor is solely responsible for marketing, administration, financial management, installation and maintenance costs. Any contract between the WSDOT and the contractor must require the contractor to install and maintain authorized community historical signs at no cost to the WSDOT.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Twenty-six states currently use a private contractor for providing highway information signs. The WSDOT currently spends approximately \$1 million on this service and receives approximately \$500,000 in revenue.

Testimony Against: This legislation would displace state employees and violates current prohibitions on contracting out. This is bad public policy.

Testified: Gordon Walgren, Interstate Local Company (pro); Toby Rickman, WSDOT (pro); Don Briscoe, Jamila Thomas Rodgers, WFSE (con).

House Amendment(s): The House amendment changes language from allowing the department to contract with a private contractor to mandating the department contract with a private contractor for a term of ten years.

Language is added to:

- allow a private contractor to set rates charged to businesses.
- require the department to contract with the highest bidder and to periodically monitor the performance of the contract.
- require the department to maximize revenue when contracting out.

Language is removed which required a contractor to pay the department a minimum 5 percent royalty.