

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6445

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Transportation, February 1, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to the creation of a license plate emblem to benefit orca whale research.

**Brief Description:** Creating a license plate emblem to benefit orca whale research.

**Sponsors:** Senators Gardner, Spanel, Prentice, Rasmussen and Fairley.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 1/25/02, 2/1/02 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6445 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Eide, Finkbeiner, Horn, Jacobsen, Kastama, Keiser, McAuliffe, McDonald, Oke, Prentice and Shin.

**Staff:** Chris Reykdal (786-7321)

**Background:** Washington State is the seasonal home to three orca whale pods: Pods J-K-L. From 1995 to 2001 the total whale population of the three pods has declined from 99 to 78. Monitoring the status of orca whales in Puget Sound waters is important because as top predators within their environment, whales act as an important indicator of the overall health of prey species such as salmon.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The Department of Licensing is directed to offer an Orca Whale Research Emblem. The emblem is a sticker that adheres to drivers' existing license plates. The cost of each emblem must not exceed \$25. The Department of Licensing retains a portion of the emblem fee to cover the cost of collection. The remainder of the fee is deposited in the Orca Whale Research Account.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife must conduct a contest with the state's K-12 student population for the design of the Orca Whale Research Emblem. The winning student receives a scholarship.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife administers a grant program for Orca Whale research by Washington State researchers for J-K-L pods. Grant awards follow a competitive request-for-proposal process administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The requirement that the Department of Licensing notify all drivers regarding the Orca Whale Emblem's availability is removed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 19, 2002.

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

**Testimony For:** Funding Orca Whale Research is an important task in understanding the entire ecosystem of the Puget Sound.

**Testimony Against:** The cost to administer the research program may exceed the revenue generated.

**Testified:** Representative Jeff Morris, Washington State House of Representatives (pro); Steve Pozzanghera, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (with concerns).