

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6488

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to a study of the designation of agricultural lands.

Brief Description: Ordering a study of the designation of agricultural lands in three counties.

Sponsors: Senators Mulliken and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/19/04, 2/26/04 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Requires the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to provide a report regarding the designation of agricultural lands with long-term commercial significance in certain counties to specific legislative committees by December 1, 2004.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Romero, Chair; D. Simpson, Vice Chair; Schindler, Ranking Minority Member; Jarrett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Clibborn, Ericksen, Mielke, Moeller and Upthegrove.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

The Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes a comprehensive land use planning framework for county and city governments in Washington. Counties and cities meeting specific population and growth criteria are required to comply with the major requirements of the GMA. Counties not meeting these criteria may choose to plan under the GMA. Twenty-nine of 39 counties, and the cities within those 29 counties, are

required to or have chosen to comply with the major requirements of the GMA (GMA jurisdictions).

The GMA requires all local governments to designate agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands of long-term significance. GMA jurisdictions also must adopt development regulations to assure the conservation of these designated natural resource lands. "Agricultural land" is defined by the GMA, in part, to include land primarily devoted to the commercial production of specified products, such as horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, vegetable, or animal products.

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) provides technical and financial assistance to jurisdictions implementing the GMA. The CTED also adopts procedural criteria to assist counties and cities in adopting comprehensive plans and development regulations that meet the goals and requirements of the GMA.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) must provide a report regarding the designation of agricultural lands with long-term commercial significance in King, Chelan, Lewis, and Yakima counties to the House of Representatives Local Government Committee and the Senate Committee on Land Use and Planning by December 1, 2004. The report must address:

- the amount of land designated as agricultural lands with long-term commercial significance;
- the amount of land in agricultural production;
- changes in the amount of agricultural land since 1990;
- comparison with amounts of land in other uses;
- designation standards and procedures;
- effect of designation on tax revenue;
- contribution of agriculture to the local economy;
- threats to maintaining the agricultural land base;
- measures local governments should adopt to better maintain the agricultural land base and sustain and enhance the agricultural industry; and
- any other type of information that will help the committees to evaluate the implementation and effect of designation.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amended bill requires the CTED to provide the specified report to House of Representatives Local Government Committee as well as the Senate Committee on Land Use and Planning. The amended bill specifies additional report criteria and includes technical changes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 27, 2004.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The local and regional impact of the agricultural industry is very significant, but land use policies in the state are not sufficiently protecting the industry. The report required by the bill will provide needed analytical information. The required report is limited to a few counties to avoid overwhelming the CTED. The fiscal note for the bill will be challenged. Support exists for amending the bill to include Lewis County in the study and to require the CTED to provide the report to the appropriate legislative committees.

(With concerns) Examining the designation of agricultural land is important. The report should include additional criteria that address: changes in the agricultural land base (land base) with those that would likely have occurred without certain GMA requirements; threats to maintaining the land base; and measures local governments should adopt to maintain the land base and enhance the agricultural industry.

(Neutral) The report required by the bill should include a study of agricultural lands in Lewis and Snohomish counties. Lewis County would be a worthwhile addition because of a recent and related order of invalidity issued by a Growth Management Hearings Board. Snohomish County should be added to examine issues surrounding soccer fields. Agricultural issues are changing, and the Growth Management Act and local jurisdictions cannot always keep up. A report criteria addressing commodity changes should be added to the bill.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Mulliken, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Genesee Adkins, 1000 Friends of Washington.

(Neutral) Scott Merriman, Washington Association of Counties.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.