

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5912

As Passed Senate, March 17, 2003

Title: An act relating to a state produce railcar pool.

Brief Description: Creating the Produce Railcar Pool.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Highways & Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Mulliken, Haugen, Sheahan, Horn, Parlette, Rasmussen and Spanel).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Highways & Transportation: 3/4/03, 3/5/03 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/17/03, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5912 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Horn, Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Esser, Finkbeiner, Haugen, Jacobsen, Kastama, Mulliken, Oke, Prentice and Spanel.

Staff: Tami Neilson (786-7452)

Background: Agricultural products are shipped to market by a variety of methods, including by truck and the Washington Fruit Express.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may establish the Washington Produce Railcar Pool to ship fresh and processed produce. To the extent funds are appropriated, the department can purchase, lease, or accept donated refrigerated railcars. WSDOT is authorized to refurbish and remodel the railcars.

A transportation management firm, whose functions will be overseen by WSDOT, may be hired to manage daily operations of the railcars. It must distribute the railcars throughout the state, and in times of excess capacity, it may loan the railcars to other shippers, including those who are out of state. Additionally, railcars may be pooled with those of other railroads, as long as the railroad provides an equal number of cars to Washington shippers.

The Produce Railcar Pool account is created.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Agriculture is the largest industry in Washington. Wheat growers have benefitted from a similar system. Stress will be taken off of Washington's roadways. There is a demand for Washington produce in the East, and this is an affordable transportation alternative to shipping by truck.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Joyce Mulliken, prime sponsor; Charlie Brown, Washington State Potato Commission; Paul Vander Stuep, Northwest Perishable Shippers Association.

House Amendment(s): A technical correction is made to the accounting provisions. The new account will retain its interest earnings.