

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 6731

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As Passed Senate, February 17, 2004

**Title:** An act relating to standards and grades for fruits and vegetables.

**Brief Description:** Concerning standards and grades for fruits and vegetables.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Agriculture (originally sponsored by Senators Honeyford, Mulliken and Rasmussen).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture: 2/5/04 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/17/04, 48-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6731 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Swecker, Chair; Brandland, Vice Chair; Jacobsen, Rasmussen and Sheahan.

**Staff:** Bob Lee (786-7404)

**Background:** Currently, it is mandatory that the Department of Agriculture establish grades and standards that asparagus must meet. For several other agricultural commodities, the department has discretion to establish standards. Additional flexibility is sought to assist the asparagus industry in selling product in other states.

**Summary of Bill:** The requirement that rules be adopted establishing standards for asparagus does not apply to asparagus shipped out of state for fresh packing.

This provision expires on December 31, 2005.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** Asparagus fields are very expensive to establish and once planted will produce a crop for 15 years. It is not like other crops where you can just seed something else the next year. With the closure of two major plants in the state who were the largest buyers of asparagus, producers are looking for a new home including selling it to out of state buyers. This bill allows the department the flexibility to address in rule the needs of the industry.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor; Charlie Brown, WA Asparagus Commission.