

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1124

As Passed House:

March 4, 2005

Title: An act relating to authorizing the use of signs, banners, or decorations over highways under limited circumstances.

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of signs, banners, or decorations over highways under limited circumstances.

Sponsors: By Representatives Eickmeyer, Buck, Blake, Upthegrove, B. Sullivan, Chase and Dunshee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/24/05, 2/3/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/4/05, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits the use of signs, banners, or decorations over highways in unincorporated areas under certain circumstances.
- Directs the Department of Transportation to adopt rules regulating signs, banners or decorations in unincorporated areas.
- Modifies the state Scenic Vistas Act to permit displays promoting local agency sponsored events when the display does not include advertising.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Wallace, Vice Chair; Woods, Ranking Minority Member; Skinner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Buck, Campbell, Curtis, Dickerson, Ericksen, Flannigan, Hankins, Hudgins, Jarrett, Kilmer, Lovick, Morris, Nixon, Schindler, Sells, Shabro, Simpson, B. Sullivan, Takko, Upthegrove and Wood.

Staff: Jay Alexander (786-7339).

Background:

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is required to adopt standards and specifications for a uniform system of traffic control devices. These standards provide consistency statewide concerning the display and location of signs, signals, signboards, guideposts, and other traffic devices erected on state highways.

The WSDOT has the authority to prohibit the suspension of signs, banners or decorations over highways in incorporated areas if they are less than 20 feet from the roadway surface. Similar authority is not provided for unincorporated areas of the state.

Under the Scenic Vistas Act, limitations are placed on the type of signs allowed within view, or within the right of way, of certain highways. The applicable highways include those designated by the legislature as being part of the scenic highway system.

Summary of Bill:

The WSDOT is permitted to include a standard in the uniform system they adopt allowing signs, banners, or decorations to be placed over a highway when they:

- are in an unincorporated area;
- are placed at least 20 vertical feet above the highway; and
- do not interfere with or obstruct the view of any traffic control device.

The WSDOT is directed to adopt rules regulating the placement of allowable signs, banners, and decorations.

An exemption is provided in the Scenic Vistas Act permitting signs, banners, or displays sponsored by local agencies. The signs, banners, or displays may not contain advertising.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill provides rural communities an economic tool by allowing local organizations to publicize community events.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Eickmeyer, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.