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**Economic Development,  
Agriculture & Trade Committee**

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**SSB 6365**

**Brief Description:** Changing fees in the weights and measures program.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Rasmussen, Schoesler, Jacobsen, Fraser and Shin; by request of Department of Agriculture).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Increases annual registration fees for commercial weighing, measuring and counting devices by varying amounts, effective July 1, 2006.
- Increases annual license application fees for weighmasters and weighers, and the registration fee for service agents, effective July 1, 2006.

**Hearing Date:** 2/17/06

**Staff:** Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

**Background:**

The state Department of Agriculture (Department) regulates all commercial weighing, measuring and counting devices used in the state, except those used in the cities of Spokane and Seattle which operate their own regulatory programs. Examples of regulated devices include gasoline pumps, railroad track scales, home heating oil truck meters, grocery store scales, taxi meters, and truck scales.

The Department's Weights and Measures program inspectors test devices for accuracy and suitability for service. They also inspect price scanner systems for accuracy; inspect packaged commodities for correct content, labeling and pricing; and investigate consumer complaints.

The Weights and Measures program was historically supported by the State General Fund until 1990 when a system based primarily on inspection fees began. In 1995, the Legislature established the current funding structure. Businesses are required to pay an annual device registration fee, according to a statutory fee schedule, ranging from \$5 to \$800, depending upon the category of the device. In 2005, 67,600 devices were registered. Ninety-two percent of these devices cost \$5 to register. Revenues from device registration fees in FY2005 totaled \$499,773.

The Department's frequency of inspection and device failure rate each differ significantly from national averages. For inspection intervals, the national average is 1 - 1.5 years. The state's average varies depending upon device. The most frequent inspections are of railroad track scales (2 years), gas pumps (2.5 years), and small scales (once every 3.7 years). Other devices are rarely, if ever, inspected. For failure rates, the national average is 6.9 percent for small scales and 6.6 percent for gas pumps, while the failure rates in the last two years for those same state-inspected devices averaged 9.5 percent and 8.9 percent respectively.

Cities with weights and measures programs may establish their own annual fees as long as they do not exceed the statutory fee schedule.

**Summary of Bill:**

The annual registration fee for commercial weighing, measuring, and counting devices are revised as shown on the following chart:

<b>Device Type</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Fee Proposed in SSB 6365</b>
Small Scale (0-400 lbs capacity)	\$ 5.00	\$ 10.00
Intermediate Scale (401-5,000 lbs)	20.00	40.00
Large Scale (5,000+ lbs)	52.00	75.00
Railroad Track Scale	800.00	800.00
Liquid Fuel Meter (0-20 gal)	5.00	10.00
Liquid Fuel Meter (21-150 gal)	16.00	32.00
Liquid Fuel Meter (151+ gallon)	25.00	50.00
Liquid Petroleum Gas Meter (small)	10.00	25.00
Liquid Petroleum Gas Meter (large)	30.00	50.00
Fabric Meter	5.00	10.00
Cordage Meter	5.00	10.00
Mass Flow Meter	14.00	200.00
Taxi Meter	5.00	25.00

The annual application fee for weighmaster's licenses is increased from \$20 to \$50 for each scale from which certified weights will be issued. The annual application fee for weighmaster's employee and agent licenses is increased from \$5 to \$10. The fee for an official service agent registration certificate or its renewal is increased from \$80 to \$160 per technician.

The Department must provide a status report to appropriate legislative committees on the Weights and Measures program by December 15, 2007.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2006.