

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6025

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
International Trade & Economic Development, February 24, 2005

Title: An act relating to the office of the Washington state trade representative.

Brief Description: Expanding the office of the Washington state trade representative.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Kohl-Welles, Thibaudeau and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: International Trade & Economic Development: 2/24/05 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6025 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Doumit, Eide, Roach and Zarelli.

Staff: Joyce Ahlering (360-786-7486)

Background: Washington's economy relies significantly on international trade, which is partially governed by trade agreements and international organizations. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are all international agreements and organizations that have an impact on Washington businesses.

The Office of the Washington State Trade Representative was created by the legislature in 1995. The Trade Representative is to act as the state's liaison with foreign governments on trade matters, coordinate trade strategies with state agencies involved in international trade, and inform the legislature on the effect of world trade agreements on the state economy.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Office of the Washington State Trade Representative is to be filled by one trade policy professional. If the office is vacant for any period of time, the funds provided to the Governor for that position are to be returned to the general fund.

The State Trade Representative is to be appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate. In addition, the office is to promote the Governor's trade efforts by initiating, organizing, and coordinating state trade missions.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The State Trade Representative responsibilities are currently diffuse in state government. The state needs someone in a high profile position to establish state trade policy and represent state trade objectives nationally and internationally. Senate consent will increase the profile of this position.

Testimony Against: Most of the Trade Representative responsibilities are already being done. This bill is not necessary.

Other: A focus on trade missions may not be appropriate for the State Trade Representative position, since other positions already promote state trade missions. Trade policy should be the main focus of the Trade Representative position.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Paull Shin, prime sponsor. OTHER: Pat Jones, Washington Public Ports Association.

CON: Robert Hamilton, Governor's Office.