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**State Government & Tribal  
Affairs Committee**

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**HB 1556**

**Brief Description:** Designating the Walla Walla sweet onion as the official Washington state vegetable.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Walsh, Grant, Haler, Sells, Springer, O'Brien, Seaquist, Ahern, Takko, Williams, Ericks, Roberts, Strow, Linville, Ormsby and McDermott.

<p><b>Brief Summary of Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Designates the Walla Walla Sweet Onion as the state vegetable.</li></ul>
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**Hearing Date:** 1/30/07

**Staff:** Colleen Kerr (786-7168).

**Background:**

The Walla Walla Sweet onion is grown in Walla Walla County, but finds its origins on the island of Corsica. Over a century ago, a retired French soldier named Peter Pieri found a sweet onion seed there and brought it to the Walla Walla Valley. The sweet onion had impressive winter hardiness well-suited for the climate of southeastern Washington. Soon Pieri and many Italian immigrants in the area began harvesting the seed. Over several generations of careful hand selection, the sweet onion developed greater sweetness, size, and shape. Since 1984, Walla Walla has celebrated the Sweet Onion Festival every July.

Onions have been a food source for at least 5000 years. There are ancient Chinese, Sumerian, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian references to the cultivation of onions. The onion was also an essential part of the Ancient Roman and Greek diet. In more recent times, the onion has been an essential part of classic French cooking in the *bourgeoise*, *nivernaise*, and *soubise* sauces. Today the onion crop is a \$400 million crop in the United States. Other sweet onion varieties are the: Texas Yellow Bermuda, White Bermuda, and Crystal Wax; the Vidalia Sweet from Georgia; Hawaii's Maui Sweet; and the Nevada Sweetie Sweet.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:**

Designates the Walla Walla Sweet Onion as the official state vegetable.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.