

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5362

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, February 15, 2007

Title: An act relating to a conservation futures levy.

Brief Description: Preserving farm and agricultural land through conservation futures levies.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, Pridemore, Rasmussen and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 1/29/07, 2/15/07 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5362 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Morton and Shin.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: The conservation futures tax is a local option property tax assessed at the county level, at a maximum rate of 6.25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Revenue from the tax may be used to purchase or acquire development rights for open space, agricultural, and timber lands.

Summary of Bill: The maximum rate of the conservation futures levy is increased to 12.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Up to 50 percent of increased revenue must only be used for acquisition of easements on agricultural land or purchase of development rights to agricultural land. Such acquisitions must be made in a way to retain the long-term agricultural use of the land. The remaining 50 percent of the increase may be used for the same purposes that the current conservation futures tax is now used.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Agriculture & Rural Economic Development): For a county to levy the additional 6.15 cents per thousand for longer than 10 years, it would have to be approved by a vote of the people in the county.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This would provide an important tool to fund programs to obtain conservation easements to important natural resource lands including agricultural lands. Several counties are utilizing the current amount that is allowed. This provides counties the ability to use this option if they choose to.

CON: There is concern that the supply of land available for development will be reduced when conservation easements are acquired.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Don Stuart, American Farmland Trust; Kaleen Cottingham, Futurewise; Eric Johnson, Washington Association of Counties.

CON: Timothy Harris, Building Industry Association of Washington.