

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6308

As Passed Senate, February 18, 2008

Title: An act relating to climate change research, preparation, and adaptation.

Brief Description: Preparing for and adapting to climate change.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Water, Energy & Telecommunications (originally sponsored by Senators Rockefeller, Regala, Murray, Kohl-Welles, Marr, Pridemore, Oemig, Kilmer, Jacobsen, Kline, Shin and McAuliffe).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Water, Energy & Telecommunications: 1/16/08, 2/01/08 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/11/08, 2/12/08 [DPS(WET), DNP, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 2/18/08, 42-5.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6308 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Rockefeller, Chair; Murray, Vice Chair; Fraser, Hatfield, Oemig and Regala.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Pridemore.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Honeyford, Ranking Minority Member; Holmquist and Morton.

Staff: Jan Odano (786-7486)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6308 as recommended by Committee on Water, Energy & Telecommunications be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Hobbs, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Rasmussen, Regala, Rockefeller and Tom.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hewitt and Honeyford.

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.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Parlette, Roach and Schoesler.

Staff: Elise Greef (786-7708)

Background: Climate change refers to any significant change in the measures of climate, such as temperature, which last for decades or longer. The Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington reports that over the past 100 years, the Pacific Northwest region has warmed about 1.5°F, with the warmest decade being the 1990s. Some of the anticipated changes from climate change in the Pacific Northwest include increased precipitation, extreme weather events, decline in snowpack, and spring arriving earlier.

The impacts of climate change are projected to bring more winter flooding and reduced summer stream flows. More winter flooding and reduced summer stream flows would impact irrigation, fish, and hydropower. Decreased water availability may bring drought conditions that would exacerbate forest fire hazards, extend the fire season, and increase fire danger in areas already subject to fires.

Climate change may also affect human health. Higher temperatures will lead to more heat-related illnesses and increased air pollution. With more incidences of heavy rainfall, there may be increased incidences of degraded water quality resulting in more water-borne diseases.

Climate change may also provide the opportunity for new pests and diseases that were previously non-existent or rarely seen in the Pacific Northwest that not only affect humans but forests, agriculture, and wildlife.

If there is a rise in the sea-level, coastal areas and especially low-lying communities of southern Puget Sound would be inundated. Increased precipitation and extreme weather events may cause severe storm surges, landslides, and erosion. These events may increase the danger to property and infrastructure.

However, agriculture may see crop yields increase with more rainfall, better growth with higher CO₂ levels, and a longer growing season as long as there is enough water. New pests and weeds may also increase as well. Crops that currently can not tolerate increased temperatures or that will depend more on water resources may suffer.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill: The Department of Ecology (Ecology) must prepare a report on its recommendations for the creation of a comprehensive climate change research, preparation, and adaptation program.

By November 1, 2008, Ecology must report to the Governor and to the appropriate committees of the Legislature recommendations for creating a comprehensive climate change research, preparation, and adaptation program. Ecology must develop its report based on the work of the Preparation and Adaptation Working Groups established by Executive Order 07-02. In addition to the working groups' issues, the report must provide recommendations for impacts to water resources and management, flood response, and protection of ecosystems and biodiversity.

When developing the report, Ecology must consider private, public, and tribal interests who may be impacted by the recommendations of the report or specific impacts of climate change being considered by the workgroups. These groups must be invited to participate in developing the report.

The report must include at least the following:

- criteria to establish state-funded research priorities;
- methods to ensure data and information systems will be most effective for and accessible to relevant planning jurisdictions and the public generally;
- funding that may be needed by local, regional, state, and other planning jurisdictions; and
- any specific projects or pilot projects identified to ensure the state is adequately prepared for the impacts of climate change.

Ecology must distribute the Comprehensive State Climate Change Assessment prepared by Ecology; Community, Trade and Economic Development; and the Climate Impacts Group. In addition, Ecology must compile and direct the preparation advisory work group reports as established by Executive Order 07-02, to the appropriate state and local policy-making bodies for consideration of the recommendations.

The Office of the Washington State Climatologist is created within the University of Washington. The State Climatologist represents the state in all climatological and meteorological matters when requested by the legislative or executive branches of state government and serves as a credible and expert source of climate and weather information for state and local decision makers and agencies. The State Climatologist is appointed by the president of the University of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Water, Energy & Telecommunications): PRO: We are already seeing significant changes from climate change and the projections are that the changes will intensify. We should not ignore the fact that we need to deal with adverse effects of climate change. We need to respond to our changing systems that affect every ecosystem, our fundamental systems such as, agriculture, forests, fisheries, and every community. It is in the best interest of the public that we take the leadership to begin to plan for those scenarios that are no longer avoidable. The state climatologist office that is created in this bill will provide useful data and information on matters pertaining to climate change.

OTHER: Make up of the workgroup needs to consider including the private sector in the water quality workgroup. We need to proceed prudently since the science is still swirling on the issue of climate change.

Persons Testifying: (Water, Energy & Telecommunications) PRO: Senator Phil Rockefeller, prime sponsor; Jack Turner, citizen; Bridget Moran, Department of Fish and

Wildlife; Janice Adair, Department of Ecology; Dennis McLerran, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency.

OTHER: John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Recommended Substitute (Ways & Means):

PRO: This bill acknowledges the need to prepare for and adapt to challenges we will experience related to climate change. It provides an opportunity to begin to gather information that could be helpful to local governments and citizens as we think about how to modify infrastructures to cope with major events such as flooding, drought, and fire to maintain our current quality of life.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Rockefeller, prime sponsor.