
Community & Economic Development & Trade Committee

HB 2227

Brief Description: Enacting the evergreen jobs act.

Sponsors: Representatives Probst, Orwall, Santos, Nelson, Sullivan, Lias, Williams, Carlyle, Maxwell, Conway, Morrell, White, Goodman, Jacks, Kenney and Seaquist.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires specified workforce education and training agencies to prioritize study programs that lead to green industry credentials, certificates and degrees.
- Establishes an Evergreen Jobs Authority to manage, direct, inventory, and coordinate state efforts to promote, develop and encourage green economic jobs.
- Authorizes the renamed "Evergreen Jobs Account" to include public or private gifts, grants or endowments, and expands its use in relation to educational purposes.

Hearing Date: 2/18/09

Staff: Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105)

Background:

2008 Green Economy Jobs Growth Initiative.

The Green Economy Jobs Growth Initiative (Green Jobs Initiative) was enacted as a part of Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill (E2SHB) 2815 during the 2008 legislative session. Its goal is to increase the number of clean energy jobs in the state to 25,000 by 2020. The Green Jobs Initiative required actions by agencies including the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED), the Employment Security Department, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTB), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Washington State University Small Business Development

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Center, the University of Washington Business and Economic Development Center, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). They were directed to:

- develop a defined list of terms associated with green economy industries and jobs;
- analyze the current labor market, projected job growth, and wage and benefit ranges of jobs in the green economy;
- research the current and projected recruitment and skill requirements of green industry employers;
- analyze the education and training requirements of entry-level and incumbent workers;
- analyze current opportunities for and barriers to participation of women- and minority-owned businesses in the green economy, and recommend specific strategies to improve participation;
- propose which industries should be considered high-demand green industries;
- develop criteria for targeting existing investments;
- recommend new or expanded financial incentives and comprehensive strategies to recruit, retain and expand green economy industries and small businesses.

A Green Industries Job Training Account (Account) was created in the State Treasury. Expenditures from the Account may be used only for competitive grants (1) to train workers for high-wage occupations in high-demand industries related to the green economy and (2) for educational purposes related to the green economy. The WTB must create and pilot green industry skill panels in order to distribute grants for training workers. The SBCTC may distribute grants for educational purposes when other public or private funds are insufficient or unavailable, including for: curriculum development; transitional jobs strategies for dislocated workers in declining industries; workforce education; and adult basic and remedial education.

In response to the directives in E2SHB 2815, during the 2008 interim the DCTED convened a Green-Economy Jobs Initiative Advisory Team with representatives from state government, education, labor, business, environmental and technology stakeholder groups. In February 2009 the DCTED provided the Legislature with a discussion draft report on their work, "Washington State's Green Economy - A Strategic Framework."

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that federal and state policy proposals include new investments in green industry research and development, green energy production incentives, green energy installation and energy efficiency retrofits. The anticipated increase in demand for green energy will create job opportunities for Washington residents; however, the state and residents may fail to take full advantage of these opportunities if there is a shortage of skilled workers. The Legislature intends that the state create a highly skilled green jobs workforce through targeted allocation of existing education and training funds as well as federal appropriations. The Legislature also intends to create an Evergreen Jobs Authority to ensure that the state is a national and world leader in the green economy.

The SBCTC, the WTB, and the Apprenticeship Council must give priority to study programs that lead to a credential, a certificate, or a degree in green industry occupations. Prioritization includes but is not limited to:

- *The use of high-demand funding for job-specific training programs in green industry occupations*, defined as primary industries that develop and use products and services that promote environmental protection, energy independence, and economic development;
- *Increased outreach in partnership with local workforce development councils to public utilities, education, labor, government, and private industry* to develop tailored, green job training programs; and,
- *Increased outreach in partnership with local workforce development councils to target populations*, defined as: (1) entry-level or incumbent workers in high-demand green industries who are in or preparing for high-wage occupations; (2) dislocated workers either in declining industries or agriculture, timber or energy sector, who may be retrained for green industries and occupations; (3) eligible veterans or National Guard members; and (4) disadvantaged populations such as low-income people and communities of color.

The Account in the State Treasury is renamed the Evergreen Jobs Account. Funds deposited in the Account may include public or private gifts, grants, or endowments. The allowable uses of grant funds distributed on a competitive basis by the SBCTC from the Account are expanded to include coordination of outreach by higher education institutions and workforce development councils.

An Evergreen Jobs Authority (Authority) is established with responsibility for:

- managing, directing, inventorying, and coordinating state efforts to promote, develop and encourage evergreen jobs;
- working with the SBCTC, the WTB, and the Apprenticeship Council to develop plans to prioritize existing funding to study programs that lead to a credential, a certificate or a degree in green industry occupations;
- working with workforce development councils, governments and others to identify and, when possible, support regional industry clusters and cluster associations in the green jobs industry;
- collaborating with local green-job businesses, identifying local and statewide skill gaps and labor shortages;
- implementing a green employment study of public sector organizations to estimate green jobs statewide;
- developing a strategic plan and performance metrics to create 15,000 green jobs statewide by 2020;
- implementing the Green Jobs Initiative and Energy Freedom Program; and,
- reporting to appropriate legislative committees by December 1, 2009, and again one year later on progress in encouraging creation and promotion of businesses in the state's green jobs industry.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 16, 2009.

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