

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1984

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Environment, Water & Energy, March 24, 2009

Title: An act relating to motor vehicle air conditioning equipment.

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of a safe alternative refrigerant in motor vehicle air conditioning equipment.

Sponsors: House Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Finn, Armstrong, Upthegrove and Wood).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/04/09, 94-1.

Committee Activity: Environment, Water & Energy: 3/20/09, 3/24/09 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, WATER & ENERGY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rockefeller, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Honeyford, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Fraser, Hatfield, Holmquist, Morton and Ranker.

Staff: Jan Odano (786-7486)

Background: Freon or chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were used in the manufacture of many products such as foam insulation, electronic products, refrigerators, and air conditioners. The release of CFCs into the atmosphere is known to deplete the ozone layer, which protects the earth from ultraviolet radiation.

The federal Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1990 banned the release of refrigerants from air conditioning and refrigeration equipment into the atmosphere. The CAA also provides for the review and identification of alternatives to ozone-depleting substances. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must publish a list of acceptable substances which reduce the overall risk to public health and the environment. The list must also state unacceptable substitutes.

Currently, the state statute for motor vehicle air conditioning equipment prohibits the use of any refrigerant that is toxic to people or flammable to be used in motor vehicle air conditioning equipment. This may inadvertently restrict the use of new technologies and alternatives to ozone depleting substances.

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: Alternative refrigerants may be used in motor vehicle air conditioning equipment if the alternatives are included on the list published by the EPA as safe alternatives motor vehicle air conditioning substitutes for chlorofluorocarbon-12.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: CFCs are known to harm the environment and this bill would allow the use of EPA-approved alternatives. The auto industry has the opportunity to use the best refrigerants.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Finn, prime sponsor; Bob Saunders, Department of Ecology; Ryan Spiller, Auto Alliance.