

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5948

As of February 20, 2009

Title: An act relating to water conservation appliances.

Brief Description: Regarding water conservation appliances.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Kastama, Jacobsen, Franklin, Berkey and Hargrove.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environment, Water & Energy: 2/18/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, WATER & ENERGY

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: The Washington State Building Code Council (Council) establishes the minimum building, mechanical, fire, plumbing, and energy code requirements by reviewing, developing, and adopting the State Building Code. The State Building Code Act (Act) provides requirements to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants or users of buildings and structures throughout the state. The Council must regularly review updated versions of the codes and other relevant information, and amend the Act as needed. The Council may issue opinions regarding the codes upon request of a local official who has a duty to enforce the Act.

Currently, the Act provides standards for toilets and urinals used in all new construction and all remodeling involving replacement of plumbing fixtures in all residential, hotel, motel, school, industrial, commercial use, or other occupancies determined by the Council to use significant quantities of water. The maximum water use allowed in gallons per flush (gpf) for toilets is 1.6 gpf. The maximum water use allowed in gallons per flush for urinals is 1.0 gpf.

Summary of Bill: By January 1, 2014, all toilets and urinals, other than the institutional variety, sold or installed in this state must be high efficiency toilets and urinals. A high efficiency toilet is one in which the effective flush volume may not exceed 1.28 gpf. A high efficiency urinal is one that uses no more than 0.5 gpf. Additionally, each manufacturer of toilets and urinals that sells toilets and urinals in this state must offer for sale a minimum percentage of high efficiency toilets and urinals.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 12, 2009.

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: In an average home, the three largest water consumers are the kitchen, the shower, and the toilet. This bill encourages the use of high-efficiency toilets to reduce the amount of water a toilet uses when flushing. This is a goal that every toilet sold in Washington by 2014 will be a high-efficiency toilet, using 1.28 gpf instead of 1.6 gpf. This bill is a good step forward for efficiency. Our current toilet standards have not been updated since 1993 and there is new technology that is available that works great. In 2007 there were 24 manufacturers who make 111 different models of high-efficiency toilets and nine manufacturers of high-efficiency urinals with 25 different models. These toilets compact the time that the flush happens so you get a larger volume of water in a shorter amount of time. These toilets perform as well or better than current toilets. This bill includes a transition market plan. These toilets can save 4,000 gallons per person per year, saving a family of four \$90 per year on their water bill.

OTHER: There is a problem with the use of these high-efficiency toilets in the line from the fixtures because there is not enough water to carry the waste out of the house and all the way to the sewage treatment plant. These toilets need secondary water use to carry the waste down the line. There should be a requirement for these high-efficiency fixtures but with proper engineering such that you should not be requiring someone who is replacing their toilet to do so with one of these because it will not work with their existing drain lines.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Allan Dietemann, city of Seattle; Gerald Desmond, Jr., Plumbing Manufacturers Institute.

OTHER: Charly Mitchel, Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors of Washington and Mitchel Plumbing.