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SENATE BILL 5138

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By Senators Rockefeller, Ranker, Jacobsen, Shin, Kohl-Welles, Kline, and Pridemore

Read first time 01/15/09. Referred to Committee on Environment, Water & Energy.

1 AN ACT Relating to an integrated climate change response strategy;  
2 and adding a new chapter to Title 43 RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that climate  
5 change poses a significant threat to Washington's economy, the health  
6 and welfare of its population, and its natural resources. Washington's  
7 water supply and natural resources are particularly vulnerable to  
8 temperature changes and shifts in precipitation patterns and could  
9 suffer devastating consequences if adaptive measures are not taken.  
10 Even with effective mitigation of climate changing activities, the  
11 region will experience inevitable impacts from climate change.

12 (2) The science and information on the effects and impacts of  
13 climate change is continually improving and this scientific information  
14 provides the basis for planning and developing preparation and  
15 adaptation actions for climate change to ensure the economic, health,  
16 safety, and environmental well-being of the state and its citizens. It  
17 is in the public interest for the state to address the effects of  
18 climate change and to be able to plan for future climate change

1 impacts. These impacts will affect individuals, public and private  
2 businesses, state and local agencies, as well as natural resources and  
3 the environment.

4 (3) It is the purpose of this chapter to create an integrated  
5 climate change response strategy with prioritized and coordinated  
6 climate change preparation and adaptation actions that state and local  
7 agencies, public and private businesses, tribes, and individuals can  
8 use to plan and prepare for the impacts of climate change through a  
9 collaborative process of on-going research, analysis, collection, and  
10 distribution of data and information.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply  
12 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

13 (1) "Department" means the department of ecology.

14 (2) "Team" means the climate change impacts coordinating team  
15 created in section 3 of this act.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The department shall assemble a climate  
17 change impacts coordinating team to gather, assess, and distribute  
18 relevant science and information on climate change and to assist state  
19 agencies, local governments, tribes, public and private businesses,  
20 organizations, and the citizens of Washington with climate change  
21 preparation and adaptation actions.

22 (2) The team is comprised of representatives from the department of  
23 community, trade, and economic development, the department of fish and  
24 wildlife, the department of natural resources, the department of  
25 health, the department of agriculture, the department of  
26 transportation, the recreation and conservation funding office, the  
27 Puget Sound partnership, the office of the insurance commissioner, the  
28 office of emergency management, and the department of general  
29 administration. The team shall invite representatives from tribes,  
30 appropriate federal agencies, local governments, and nongovernmental  
31 organizations to participate as members of the team.

32 (3) The team shall serve as a central clearinghouse for relevant  
33 scientific and technical information about the impacts of climate  
34 change on Washington state's ecology, economy, and society, as well as  
35 serve as a central convener for the development of vital programs and

1 necessary policies to help the state adapt to a rapidly changing  
2 climate.

3 (4) The team may seek assistance from a science advisory group, the  
4 office of Washington state climatologist, and designate other technical  
5 advisory groups that the team feels are necessary to assist it with  
6 developing the strategy and actions.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) By December 1, 2011, the team shall  
8 develop an integrated climate change response strategy to better enable  
9 state and local agencies, public and private businesses,  
10 nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to prepare for, address,  
11 and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The team shall convey and  
12 communicate recommendations so that policymakers, public and private  
13 businesses, and individuals can easily understand and recognize the  
14 implications of the climate change response strategy. The integrated  
15 climate change response strategy should address the impact of and  
16 adaptation to climate change, as well as the regional capacity to  
17 undertake actions, existing ecosystem and resource management concerns,  
18 and health and economic risks. In addition, the team should include  
19 a range of scenarios for the purposes of planning in order to assess  
20 project vulnerability and, to the extent feasible, reduce expected  
21 risks and increase resiliency to the impacts of climate change.

22 (2) The integrated climate change response strategy must include  
23 climate change preparation and adaptation actions that ensure  
24 collaborative and cooperative activities.

25 (a) The team shall develop an integrated climate change response  
26 strategy that: Summarizes the best known science on climate change  
27 impacts to Washington; assesses Washington's vulnerability to the  
28 identified climate change impacts; prioritizes solutions that can be  
29 implemented within and across state agencies; and identifies  
30 recommended funding mechanisms and technical and other essential  
31 resources for implementing solutions. The strategy must include  
32 adaptation plans of action to address:

- 33 (i) Water resources;
- 34 (ii) Ocean and coastal resources;
- 35 (iii) Infrastructure requirements;
- 36 (iv) Biodiversity;
- 37 (v) Public health risks and consequences; and

1 (vi) Working landscapes, such as forest and agricultural lands.

2 (b) The strategy must include information about the latest research  
3 and projects, including:

4 (i) Risk assessment models and data, including evaluations of the  
5 consequences, magnitude, and probability of climate change impacts;

6 (ii) Comprehensive impact assessments that examine how climate  
7 change is likely to affect the natural environment and physical  
8 infrastructure, as well as the economic impacts on municipal and rural  
9 operations;

10 (iii) Efforts to identify priority planning areas for action, based  
11 on vulnerability and risk assessments;

12 (iv) Efforts to identify economic and other social costs and  
13 benefits, both market and nonmarket, of alternative adaptation  
14 strategies;

15 (v) Barriers challenging state and local governments to take  
16 action, such as laws, policies, regulations, rules, and procedures that  
17 require revision to adequately address adaptation to climate change;

18 (vi) Opportunities to integrate climate science and projected  
19 impacts into planning and decision making;

20 (vii) Methods to strengthen community partnerships that reduce  
21 vulnerabilities and risks to climate change;

22 (viii) Methods to increase public awareness of climate change, its  
23 projected impacts on the community, and to build support for meaningful  
24 adaptation policies and strategies; and

25 (ix) Methods to increase surveillance to ensure early detection of  
26 subtle changes that can inform interventions and adaptation measures.

27 (3) The team shall complete a climate impacts assessment report  
28 that includes the status of the integrated climate change response  
29 strategy and provide it to the appropriate committees of the  
30 legislature by December 1, 2010.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The science advisory group shall provide  
32 independent, nonrepresentational scientific advice to the team. The  
33 science advisory group members shall assist the team in: (a)  
34 Identifying the timing and extent of impacts from climate change; (b)  
35 assessing the effects of climate variability and change in the context  
36 of multiple interacting stressors or impacts; (c) developing  
37 forecasting models; (d) determining the resilience of the environment,

1 natural systems, communities, and organizations to deal with potential  
2 or actual impacts of climate change and the vulnerability to which a  
3 natural or social system is susceptible to sustaining damage from  
4 climate change impacts; and (e) identifying other issues, as determined  
5 by the team, necessary to develop policies and actions for the  
6 integrated climate change response strategy.

7 (2) The chair of the science advisory group must be a scientist  
8 with recognized expertise in a field or fields of science essential to  
9 preparing for and adapting to climate change. The chair serves for a  
10 term of three years. The chair shall: (a) Select experts from  
11 scientific disciplines as needed to assist the team with developing an  
12 integrated climate change response strategy; and (b) coordinate the  
13 science advisory group activities to ensure the priorities and goals of  
14 the team are met.

15 (3) The state climatologist shall serve as the initial chair of the  
16 science advisory group. The governor or the governor's designee shall  
17 either reappoint the chair of the science advisory group or appoint a  
18 successor to assume the duties of the chair after the initial term.

19 (4) In establishing the science advisory group, the team shall  
20 request that the Washington academy of sciences provide a list of  
21 candidates to the chair of the science advisory group. The list of  
22 candidates should reflect the full range of scientific disciplines  
23 involved in climate change, including scientists associated with  
24 federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, business and environmental  
25 communities, colleges, and university communities. The chair of the  
26 science advisory group may also seek advice from the scientific  
27 community to develop membership for the science advisory group.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** State agencies shall strive to incorporate  
29 adaptation plans of action as priority activities when planning or  
30 designing agency policies and programs. Agencies shall consider: The  
31 integrated climate change response strategy when designing, planning,  
32 and funding infrastructure projects; and incorporating natural resource  
33 adaptation actions and alternative energy sources when designing and  
34 planning infrastructure projects.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** (1) The office of Washington state  
36 climatologist is created within the University of Washington.

1 (2) The office of Washington state climatologist consists of the  
2 director of the office, who is the state climatologist, and appropriate  
3 staff and administrative support as necessary to carry out the powers  
4 and duties of the office as enumerated in this section.

5 (3) The director of the office must be appointed by the president  
6 of the University of Washington.

7 (4) The office of Washington state climatologist has the following  
8 powers and duties:

9 (a) To serve as a credible and expert source of climate and weather  
10 information for state and local decision makers and agencies working on  
11 drought, flooding, climate change, and other related issues;

12 (b) To gather and disseminate, and where practicable archive, in  
13 the most cost-effective manner possible, all climate and weather  
14 information that is or could be of value to policy and decision makers  
15 in the state;

16 (c) To act as the representative of the state in all climatological  
17 and meteorological matters, both within and outside of the state, when  
18 requested by the legislative or executive branches of the state  
19 government;

20 (d) To prepare, publish, and disseminate climate summaries,  
21 including annual climate impact assessments for those individuals,  
22 agencies, and organizations whose activities are related to the welfare  
23 of the state and are affected by climate and weather;

24 (e) To supply critical information for drought preparedness and  
25 emergency response as needed to implement the state's drought  
26 contingency response plan maintained by the department under RCW  
27 43.83B.410, and to serve as a member of the state's drought water  
28 supply and emergency response committees as may be formed in response  
29 to a drought event;

30 (f) To conduct and report on studies of climate and weather  
31 phenomena of significant socioeconomic importance to the state; and

32 (g) To evaluate the significance of natural and man-made changes in  
33 important features of the climate affecting the state, and to report  
34 this information to those agencies and organizations in the state who  
35 are likely to be affected by these changes.

1        NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 8.**   Sections 1 through 7 of this act constitute  
2   a new chapter in Title 43 RCW.

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