

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6221

As of February 6, 2012

Title: An act relating to state capital funding of health and safety improvements at agricultural fairs.

Brief Description: Concerning state capital funding of health and safety improvements at agricultural fairs.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Schoesler and Hewitt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development: 1/23/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: The first agricultural fair in Washington State was held in 1892. As of 2005 there were 72 fair and other fairground activities in the state including county fairs, area fairs, youth fairs and community fairs. It is estimated that 7.8 million people attended events held at fairgrounds that year. By comparison, 4.6 million people visited the Seattle Center and 1.2 million attended events in Key Arena in 2005.

According to an economic impact analysis entitled "Washington State Fairs and other Fairground Activities," the gross economic impact from Washington State fairs and other fairground activities was between \$350 and \$385 million in 2005 and provided about 5,700 temporary jobs. The estimated tax revenues generated by fair and non-fair activities were reported between \$22.7 and \$25 million in 2005.

Summary of Bill: An agricultural fair is defined as a fair or exhibition that is intended to promote agriculture by including a balanced variety of exhibits of livestock and agricultural products as well as related arts and manufactures. This includes products of the farm home, educational contests, displays, and demonstrations designed to train youth and promote the welfare of farm people and rural living.

Of capital funds appropriated to the Department of Agriculture (WSDA), funding can be provided on a competitive basis to support capital projects that make health and safety

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improvements to agricultural fair grounds or fair activities that benefit participants and the fair-going public.

WSDA is to develop and manage contracts, monitor expenditures and grantee performance, and report project and contract information. WSDA must include provisions in contracts that require the capital improvements be held by the grantee for a specified period of time for the express purpose of the grant. If the grantee is found to be out of compliance with the provisions of the contract, the grantee must repay to the state General Fund the principal amount of the grant plus interest.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: This bill opens the door so that non-profit community fairs can compete for funds appropriated for health and safety improvements on fairgrounds. Currently, only county fairs may apply. When Mason County turned over the operation of its fairgrounds to a non-profit association, it ceased to be eligible for funding. This bill would allow other community fairs, of which number less than a dozen, such as the Lacamas fair to compete for available funds. County health departments have raised concerns about some of the fair facilities and this bill will help fairs address those concerns.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Heather Hansen, WA State Fairs Assn.