

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1685

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources
General Government & Information Technology

Title: An act relating to the establishment of a Washington food policy forum.

Brief Description: Establishing a Washington food policy forum.

Sponsors: Representatives Gregerson, Hudgins, McBride, Peterson, Bergquist, Ortiz-Self, Tarleton, Orwall, Robinson, Farrell, Riccelli, Fitzgibbon, Walkinshaw, Senn, Lytton, Appleton, Ryu, Tharinger, Moscoso, Ormsby, Fey and Jinkins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/4/15, 2/12/15 [DPS];

General Government & Information Technology: 2/20/15, 2/23/15 [DPS(AGNR)].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes the Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) as a public-private partnership for the purposes of creating a forum in which state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues can be examined, improved, and better integrated.
- Requires the Forum to make recommendations to the Legislature, transmitted through the State Conservation Commission, by October 31, 2016.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Lytton, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee, Hurst, Pettigrew, Stanford and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Kretz, Orcutt and Schmick.

Staff: Peter Clodfelter (786-7127).

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.

Background:

Food policy councils or forums collaborate to address challenges related to a food system. A food policy council or forum is typically comprised of stakeholders interested in a local, regional, or state food system. Councils or forums can be formed by executive order, state law, local ordinance, or through community grass-roots efforts. In general, a food policy council or forum may work on issues related to supporting a local, sustainable food system and addressing issues such as food system infrastructure, public health, and local economic development. Examples of food policy council or forum projects might include community gardens, farm-to-school programs, and support for food bank programs. Various forms of statewide food policy councils operate in other states. Also, there is a Regional Food Policy Council in King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties. In 2008 the Legislature passed the Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act (Act), which was intended to strengthen links between state agriculture and state food procurement as a method to expand local markets, improve nutrition, and benefit the environment. The Act created four programs:

- the Farm-to-School Program administered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture;
- the Washington Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant Program administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- the Farmers Market Technology Improvement Pilot Program administered by the Department of Social and Health Services; and
- the Farmers to Food Banks Pilot Program administered by the Department of Commerce.

During the 2010 legislative session a broad coalition worked with the Legislature to propose Senate Bill 6343, which called for the creation of the Washington Food Policy Council. The bill did not become law and, subsequently, Governor Gregoire issued Executive Order 10-02 "Strengthening Washington's Food Systems through Policy and Collaboration."

Executive Order 10-02 called for a more focused examination of state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues. Further, Executive Order 10-02 directed certain state agencies to assess existing data, identify gaps and opportunities, and support solutions for improving the state food system. An interagency work group was created consisting of the state Department of Health, the state Department of Social and Health Services, the state Department of Agriculture, the state Conservation Commission, and the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 2012 the interagency work group recommended the establishment of the Food System Roundtable (Roundtable).

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) is established for the purposes of creating a forum in which state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues can be examined, improved, and better integrated. The State Conservation Commission (Commission) is required to staff the forum.

Forum Membership.

The Director of the Commission (Director) is responsible for appointing the Forum's members. In making those appointments, the Director must attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspective by building on the representation established by the Food System Roundtable initiated pursuant to Executive Order No. 10-02 and appointing members from sources like state and federal governments, academia, related nonprofit and community groups, and the food industry, including food production, processing, distribution, marketing, and retail sales. A majority of those members must appoint an administrative chair.

In addition to the members appointed by the Director, four state legislators may serve on the Forum in an ex officio capacity. For appointments of these legislative Forum members, the Speaker of the House of Representatives is required to appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate is required to appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses in the Senate. Each member of the Forum, legislative or non-legislative, serves without compensation, except for certain travel reimbursements.

Forum Goals.

The Forum makes recommendations after considering specific goals. The Forum's goals include:

- increasing production, sales, and consumption of Washington-grown foods;
- developing programs that increase purchases of Washington-grown foods for schools, adult care programs, and other state-funded food programs;
- reviewing and developing programs that support providing proper nutrition and avoid burdens associated with obesity and chronic diet-related diseases;
- protecting land and water resources needed for sustained local production;
- examining ways to encourage and allow people to continue farming and providing for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution in Washington; and
- reducing food insecurity and hunger in Washington by ensuring that access to nutritious food is available to families of all income levels.

Mandatory Considerations While Making Forum Recommendations.

While making recommendations, the Forum is required to consider how the following things may help achieve the Forum's goals:

- increased collaboration and communication between state agencies;
- increased collaboration and communication between local, state, and federal agencies;
- public-private partnerships that can leverage private and public market influence, like through institutional purchasing and contracting;
- improvements to laws and regulations relevant to the food system and food security in the Washington;
- improvements in how state and federal programs are implemented that are relevant to the food system and food security in Washington; and
- identification of additional federal, state, local, and private investments needed to accomplish the recommendations.

Also, while developing the Forum's recommendations, the Forum is required to coordinate with the Office of Farmland Preservation to avoid duplication of effort, and coordinate with and build on processes established by the Washington State Food System Roundtable initiated pursuant to Executive Order 10-02. Further, also while developing the Forum's recommendations, the Forum may conduct research and analysis as needed within available financial resources and form an advisory committee or committees to address issues identified by the Forum as requiring additional study.

Presenting the Forum's Recommendations.

The Forum's recommendations must be transmitted to the Legislature through the State Conservation Commission by October 31, 2016. The Forum's recommendations may include considerations for continuation of the Forum beyond the expiration date provided in the bill, July 1, 2017, and any changes to the mission, charge, or structure of the Forum if it continues beyond that expiration date.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

In making appointments to the forum, the Director of the Commission is required to attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives by building on the representation established by the Roundtable initiated pursuant to Executive Order 10-02. Also, a majority of the appointed members must appoint an administrative chair, rather than the Director of the Commission appointing an administrative chair. Last, it is clarified that staff for the Forum is provided by the Commission and that the Commission is responsible for transmitting the Forum's recommendations to the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The idea for the Forum was first before the Legislature in 2010. Other states have different types of food policy councils that perform similar roles as the Forum proposed in Washington. Determining how to improve state food programs is important. The Forum would be a good tool to analyze, reduce, and eliminate food insecurity in the state. Also, the Forum would be a good tool to find solutions that would allow people to continue farming operations in the state. The Roundtable, which was initiated pursuant to an executive order, has done good work beginning a conversation about state food policy and programs, and the Forum should help continue that work and support the Roundtable. Suggestions for improving the Forum are clarifying the public-private partnership nature of the Forum and clarifying the relationship between the Forum and the Commission.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Gregerson, prime sponsor; Victor Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition; and Josh Giuntoli, Washington State Conservation Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Morris and Takko.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives MacEwen, Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCabe.

Staff: Dan Jones (786-7118).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On General Government & Information Technology Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Agriculture & Natural Resources:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill continues the work of Senate Bill 6343, and Executive Order 10-02 from 2010. This bill would provide a public-private partnership forum to make sure that the people of Washington have food security. The required report would ensure that the work is continued forward. The ex officio members of the Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) would provide political will, safeguard the work being done on a day-to-day basis, and help other members of the Legislature understand the Forum's concerns. The Forum would allow all stakeholder voices to be heard.

The issues that would be discussed by the Forum are complex and multi-faceted, from farmers and food production to child nutrition. The fiscal note costs are for staff coordination and to make sure the right people are at the table moving the issues forward. The Conservation Commission (Commission) was chosen to implement this bill because many conservation districts work with farmers on food security issues at the local level, and because the Commission's Office of Farmland Preservation has been working on strategies for preserving agricultural land.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Gregerson, prime sponsor; and Ron Shultz, Washington State Conservation Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.