

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4009

As Reported by House Committee On:
Environment

Brief Description: Requesting action to address global climate change.

Sponsors: Representatives Fitzgibbon, McBride, Peterson, Fey, Ryu, S. Hunt and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Environment: 2/16/15, 2/19/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests that the United States take action to address climate change as part of an international or global commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Chair; Peterson, Vice Chair; Farrell, Fey, Goodman and McBride.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Shea, Ranking Minority Member; Short, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harris, Pike and Taylor.

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

The federal United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the state Department of Ecology (ECY) identify carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride as greenhouse gasses (GHGs) as a result of their capacity to trap heat in the earth's atmosphere.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, GHGs are regulated as an air pollutant and are subject to several air regulations administered by the EPA. These federal Clean Air Act regulations include a requirement that facilities and fuel suppliers whose associated annual emissions exceed 25,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent report their emissions to the EPA.

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.

At the state level, GHGs are regulated by the ECY under the state Clean Air Act. This state law requires facilities, sources, and sites whose emissions exceed 10,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent each year to report their annual emissions to the ECY or to local air authorities that implement the state Clean Air Act. Liquid motor vehicle and aircraft fuel suppliers that supply fuel whose combustion would exceed that same 10,000-ton volumetric threshold must also report their annual emissions.

Apart from reporting and other regulations under the state and federal clean air acts, several other state laws and programs explicitly address GHG emissions. State law prohibits Washington utilities from investing in or making a long-term financial commitment to sources of electricity whose generation exceeds a GHG emissions performance standard of 1,100 pounds of GHGs per megawatt-hour or a separate standard for natural gas generation as determined by the Department of Commerce.

State law also establishes the following limits for statewide GHG emission levels:

- By 2020, overall GHG emissions in the state must be reduced to 1990 levels.
- By 2035, overall GHG emissions in the state must be reduced to 25 percent below 1990 levels.
- By 2050, overall GHG emissions in the state must be reduced to 50 percent below 1990 levels or 70 percent below the state's expected emissions that year.

These emission limits do not specify how the state must achieve the established limits, nor does it require emission reductions to be achieved by particular entities or types of entities. The ECY is responsible for monitoring and tracking the state's progress towards the emissions limits.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature requests that the United States take action to address global climate change by joining an international or global commitment to substantially reduce GHG emissions. A number of proclamations are made related to climate change, including that global climate change is an urgent and human-caused problem that leads to drought, forest fires, and other environmental effects, that climate change is most effectively addressed on an international and global scale, and that the state and nation have already taken significant steps to reduce GHG emissions but that additional actions are needed to mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The United States has high per-capita greenhouse gas emissions compared to other nations and needs to be part of a global solution. Washington is also an important part of the global solution to climate change. The impacts of climate change are felt across the globe and drive social conflicts. Socially and economically disadvantaged groups in the United States and abroad are the most susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Fitzgibbon, prime sponsor; Rebecca Johnson, Climate Solutions; and Ellicott Dandy, One America.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.