

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1685

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development, March 31, 2015

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

Brief Description: Establishing a Washington food policy forum.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by 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: Passed House: 3/06/15, 53-45.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development: 3/17/15, 3/31/15 [DP-WM, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.
Signed by Senators Warnick, Chair; Hatfield, Ranking Minority Member; Hobbs.

Minority Report: Do not pass.
Signed by Senators Dansel, Vice Chair; Honeyford.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: Food policy councils or forums collaborate to address challenges related to a food system. They are typically comprised of stakeholders interested in a local, regional, or state food system and can be formed by executive order, state law, local ordinance, or through community grass-roots efforts.

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.

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.

An interagency workgroup was created consisting of the state Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Agriculture, State Conservation Commission, and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 2012 the interagency workgroup recommended the establishment of the Food System Roundtable (Roundtable).

Summary of Bill: The Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) is established as a public-private partnership to examine, improve, and better integrate state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues. The State Conservation Commission (Commission) provides staffing for the forum.

The Forum's goals are to address the following: increasing Washington-grown food sales, production, and consumption, including state purchasing; reducing obesity and chronic diet-related diseases; protecting land and water resources needed for sustained local food production; retaining farmers; educating an agricultural workforce; economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution; reducing food insecurity and hunger; and accessing nutritious food at all income levels, especially by vulnerable children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and communities of color.

The Forum's recommendations must consider at least five specified ways to achieve the goals.

The Forum must coordinate with the Office of Farmland Preservation; solicit public input; coordinate with the Roundtable initiated by Executive Order No. 10-02, and coordinate with the Washington State University Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources (Center).

The director of the State Conservation Commission (Director) must appoint the membership of the Forum. In making appointments of an unspecified number for unspecified terms, the Director must build on the representation established by the Roundtable and make appointments from various other sources. A majority of the members appoint the administrative chair.

Four legislators, one from each of the two largest caucuses, may serve in their ex officio capacity and must be appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. All members serve without compensation but receive travel expense reimbursement.

The Director must transmit a report to the Legislature by October 31, 2016.

The Forum must coordinate with the Center and may provide technical information, advice and assistance. The Center must produce a study that builds on the Roundtable's work. The study must identify a 25-year goal for expanding the state's food production, processing, and distribution capacity by use of ten factors. The study's recommendations must include short and long-term action plans for the Legislature and strategies for effective education and awareness. The study's recommendations may include legislative and non-legislative approaches. The Center must report its study to the Forum by July 1, 2016.

The act expires July 1, 2017.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is designed to create opportunities and efficiencies and honor the roundtable's work. It's a hand up, not a hand out. It will build resilience into the food network; consider how food gets to market especially in highly urbanized populations; and encourage local foods from small farms. Food policies are part of the economic drivers that can cause loss of farms. The hope is for favorable responses to federal grant requests in the future. This effort provides strategic market research that is needed to bolster the regional food economy that depends on wholesome food and healthy soil. These efforts will help provide economic equity for the food chain.

CON: The Washington State Department of Agriculture should have been included.

OTHER: A major role should be developed for the Washington State Department of Agriculture to participate. There are already many programs that work, such as farm-to-school, which could provide the expertise the bill needs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Gregerson, prime sponsor; Representative Tarleton; Josh Giuntoli, WA State Conservation Commission; Tim Crosby, Director, Slow Money NW; Vic Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition.

CON: Ben Buchholz, NW Food Processors Assn.

OTHER: Tom Davis, WA Farm Bureau.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: No one.