

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5068

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As of January 22, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to signage advertising free coffee at safety rest areas.

**Brief Description:** Requiring the restoration of signage advertising free coffee at safety rest areas.

**Sponsors:** Senators Pearson, Mullet and Fraser.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 1/22/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Hayley Gamble (786-7452)

**Background:** The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) operates 48 Safety Rest Areas (SRAs) around the state. All but three of these are currently operated 24 hours per day, seven days per week. For several decades, WSDOT has supported a Free Coffee Program at up to 37 SRAs. This program allows registered nonprofit organizations to provide coffee and other light refreshments at no charge to SRA users. Although the coffee is free, participating organizations are allowed to accept donations. Nonprofit organizations must register with WSDOT and receive designated time slots at specific rest areas to participate in this program.

Past practice at SRAs with an active Free Coffee Program was to allow members of the organization providing the coffee to manually flip a sign, visible from the highway, that indicated free coffee was being served, and then to close that sign when they left. Due to concerns raised by WSDOT staff relating to the safety of the people flipping the free coffee signs, the signs were removed beginning in 2012. Two electronic signs that could be turned off and on remotely were left in place until the signs failed in 2014.

**Summary of Bill:** By August 2015, WSDOT must restore all signage that was in place at the end of 2011, including electronic signage, used to advertise the availability of free coffee at SRAs.

**Appropriation:** None.

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*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.*

**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 issue was brought forward by a constituent that raised money through the free coffee program. WSDOT has stated that they are working to put the signs back up so it is possible that a bill will no longer be needed. It is good when driving long distances to get off the highway. Masons, Cattleman, off-roading, Washington State Grange and other groups benefit from this program. WSDOT supports the free coffee program but there were significant safety issue for volunteers due to the location of these signs. WSDOT got no response when the signs were removed, but have now heard about the drop in donations. WSDOT proposed to install Free Coffee Volunteer Program static signs at 13 rest areas.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Pearson, prime sponsor; Chris Christopher, WSDOT; Laura Tracy, WA State Grange.