

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6292

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As Passed Senate, February 16, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to eliminating the reduction in state basic education funding that occurs in counties with federal forest lands.

**Brief Description:** Eliminating the reduction in state basic education funding that occurs in counties with federal forest lands.

**Sponsors:** Senators Braun, Becker, Rivers and Sheldon.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/01/16, 2/04/16 [DP-WM, DNP].  
Ways & Means: 2/08/16, 2/09/16 [DP, DNP, w/oRec].  
Passed Senate: 2/16/16, 35-14.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Billig, Fain, Hill, Rivers and Rolfes.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Mullet.

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hill, Chair; Braun, Vice Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; Honeyford, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Hargrove, Ranking Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Member on the Capital Budget; Ranker, Ranking Minority Member, Operating; Bailey, Becker, Brown, Conway, Hewitt, Nelson, O'Ban, Padden, Parlette, Schoesler and Warnick.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Darneille and Pedersen.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Billig, Hasegawa and Rolfes.

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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.*

**Staff:** Lorrell Noahr (786-7708)

**Background:** Federal forests comprise over 21 percent of all of Washington land. The federal government provides a portion of the revenues from the management of these lands to the counties in which the lands are located. The majority of the revenues come from the harvest of timber. A portion of the federal forest revenue must be distributed to the public school district within the county. If there is more than one school district within the county then the funds are distributed in proportion to the number of full-time equivalent students in each respective district.

Prior to 2014, the state basic education allocation to school districts in counties with federal forest lands was reduced by an amount equal to the federal forest revenue that the school district received. Under legislation enacted in 2014, the state basic education allocation to a school district with a poverty level of at least 57 percent is reduced only by the portion of federal forest revenues that exceeds \$70,000. A school district's poverty level is determined by the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch in the previous school year.

The 2015-17 biennial budget included a proviso that school districts receiving federal forest funds must not have their basic education allocation reduced during the 2015-17 biennium.

**Summary of Bill:** The reduction of a school district's basic education allocation due to receipt of federal forest revenue is eliminated.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on September 1, 2016.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** PRO: This is a simple but very important bill. It gets the federal forest revenue to the school districts by eliminating the reduction to the school districts' basic education allocation. We already have this policy in the the biennial budget as a temporary fix. This would put it into statute and allow us to count on the money in the future. About 215 school districts across the state currently receive some amount of federal forest revenue. The school districts that would benefit most from this legislation are those in Eastern and Southwestern Washington, and those on the Olympic Peninsula. These school districts have a very limited tax base, weak economies, and huge amounts of federal forest land. The communities, schools, and students could be helped by having full access to the federal forest revenue.

**Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** PRO: Senator Braun, prime sponsor; Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, Washington State School Director's Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: This is a simple step to provide federal forest payments due to over 200 school districts located near federal forest land. Original intent of the bill was to provide support to many school districts located in property tax poor counties. These districts are based in eastern Washington, southwest Washington, and the Olympic peninsula.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Jessica Vavrus, Wa State School Directors' Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.