

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1267

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**As Passed House:**  
February 27, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to creating the wastewater treatment plant operator certification account.

**Brief Description:** Creating the wastewater treatment plant operator certification account.

**Sponsors:** Representatives DeBolt, Hudgins, Dolan, Fitzgibbon and Haler; by request of Department of Ecology.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Appropriations: 1/23/17, 2/9/17 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/27/17, 77-19.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification Account.
- Directs fees for wastewater treatment plant operator certificates into the new account rather than the State General Fund.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Nealey, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

**Staff:** Dan Jones (786-7118).

**Background:**

Operators of sewage treatment plants are required to be certified by the Water Quality Program at the Department of Ecology. Certification is achieved through a computer-based

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exam and is available in five levels, each with progressively higher requirements for education and experience. Certification must be renewed every three years. There are currently around 2,000 certified wastewater treatment plant operators in Washington.

The fee for a Wastewater Operator certificate (certificate) is \$50 for a new certificate and \$30 for a renewed certificate. The fee levels are set in statute and were last amended in 1987, when they were raised from the original amounts of \$10 for a new certificate and \$5 for a renewal. The fee revenue is deposited into the State General Fund.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification Account (Account) is created in the State Treasury. The Account is appropriated and may only be used for the Wastewater Operator Certification Program (Program) at the Department of Ecology. All fees related to the Program certificates are directed into the new account instead of the State General Fund.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Wastewater treatment operators are the first line of defense for protecting public health and keeping waters clean. The Department of Ecology's Wastewater Operator Certificate Program (Program) ensures wastewater treatment plants are operated safely and effectively by certifying operators and keeping them up to date on technical advances. Creating the new account in the bill will make the Program more sustainable and more consistent with a similar program at the Department of Health for drinking water utilities. The Program's State General Fund appropriation has decreased significantly in the past six years, and no longer supports the Program. The amount of money involved is small in comparison to the importance of the Program. The technology at wastewater treatment plants is changing, so it is important that the operators are trained and know what they are doing.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Eli Levitt, Department of Ecology; and Joe Daniels, Washington Association of Water Sewer Districts.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.