
State Government & Tribal Relations
Committee

HB 2747

Brief Description: Establishing the state microanimal.

Sponsors: Representatives Ramel, Lekanoff, Riccelli and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates the tardigrade as the official state microanimal.

Hearing Date: 1/29/20

Staff: Carrington Skinner (786-7192).

Background:

The tardigrade, also known as the water bear or moss piglet, is a microscopic animal that lives in virtually every habitat on Earth and can be found in every county in Washington. Tardigrades live in lichens and moss, as well as in marine and freshwater sediments, soil, sea water, fresh water, glaciers, hot springs, deserts, and rain forests. The phylum *tardigrada*, whose name derives from Latin words meaning "slow stepper," contains more than 1,000 species. Tardigrades have barrel-shaped bodies with four pairs of stubby legs, and typically range in length from 0.3 to 0.5 millimeters, though some species may exceed one millimeter.

Many species of tardigrade are known for being able to survive in extreme conditions, including high and low temperatures and the vacuum of outer space. They have been identified in fossil records dating back 530 million years, and have survived the past five mass extinctions on Earth. Some tardigrades are able to change into a "tun" state that protects the animal when it is experiencing life-threatening situations, including a lack of water or oxygen. Tardigrades have been studied for methods to adapt to climate change and withstand radiation damage from cancer treatment due to their ability to survive in extreme conditions.

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Tardigrades play a role in soil health, as they eat microorganisms that can destroy crops, such as nematodes, as well as bacteria, fungi, and plant cells. In processing organic matter, they help to clean soil and water.

Washington has previously designated several animals as official state symbols, including the Olympic marmot as the state endemic mammal, the Pacific chorus frog as the state amphibian, and the steelhead trout as the state fish.

Summary of Bill:

The tardigrade is designated as the official state microanimal of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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