
Environment & Energy Committee

2SSB 5093

Brief Description: Enhancing litter control along state highways.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senator Fortunato).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to give priority to litter control along state highways when distributing funds for litter control.
- Requires Ecology to contract with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to schedule litter prevention messaging and coordination of litter emphasis patrols with the Washington State Patrol.
- Authorizes WSDOT to coordinate with Ecology to conduct litter pickup during scheduled maintenance closures as situations allow.

Hearing Date: 3/21/19

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

The Waste Reduction, Recycling, and Litter Control Act (Act), dating to 1971, establishes statewide programs to prevent and clean up litter, reduce waste, and increase recycling. The Act also prohibits littering on state and private lands not owned by the litterer. The Act gives police powers to enforce littering restrictions to a variety of government agencies and personnel, including the Department of Ecology (Ecology) and State Parks and Recreation Commission employees, local government agencies with law enforcement capabilities, Washington State Patrol officers, the Department of Fish and Wildlife officers, fire wardens, and forest rangers.

A tax is imposed on businesses whose products, including packaging, wrapping, and containers, are reasonably related to littering. The types of products that fall under this tax include beer, cigarettes, soft drinks, newspapers and magazines, glass containers, metal containers, and household paper and paper products.

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.

The revenues from the litter tax are allocated to Ecology from the Waste Reduction, Recycling, and Litter Control Account (WRRLA), although the 2017-2019 operating budget diverted \$9 million of the litter tax to the state parks renewal and stewardship account before it was deposited into the WRRLA.

The funds in the litter tax account are distributed as follows:

1. Fifty percent is provided to Ecology for their use and for the Department of Natural Resources and other state agencies for litter collection programs. The Department of Revenue also receives a small portion of the revenue for administering the funds in the account.
2. Twenty percent of the revenue from litter tax goes to local governments for waste reduction, litter control, and recycling activities.
3. Thirty percent of the funds go to Ecology for waste reduction and recycling efforts. These funds are also used for statewide public awareness programs, and to defray local government administration costs so they can apply all of their funding to achieving program goals.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) must give priority to litter control along state highways when distributing funds for litter control. The Department of Ecology must contract with the Washington State Department of Transportation to schedule litter prevention messaging and coordination of litter emphasis patrols with the Washington State Patrol. The Washington State Department of Transportation may coordinate with Ecology to conduct litter pickup during scheduled maintenance closures as situations allow.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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