

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5093

As Reported by House Committee On:
Environment & Energy

Title: An act relating to enhancing litter control along state highways.

Brief Description: Enhancing litter control along state highways.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Environment & Energy: 3/21/19, 3/28/19 [DP].

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Chair; Lekanoff, Vice Chair; Shea, Ranking Minority Member; Dye, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, DeBolt, Doglio, Fey, Mead, Peterson and Shewmake.

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

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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.

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 WRRLA are distributed as follows:

1. 50 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. 20 percent of the revenue from litter tax goes to local governments for waste reduction, litter control, and recycling activities; and
3. 30 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: Preliminary 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) More and more debris is appearing along the sides of roads. One could probably furnish a three bedroom house with all the litter along the road. The litter tax account has been swept in recent years, with less and less priority given to picking up litter along highways. The Washington Youth Corps are picking up litter, but the Department of Ecology cannot close traffic lanes, and sometimes debris is found in the traveled roadway or along the median. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) can help with that. There needs to be a change in emphasis such that when WSDOT closes a lane, they can bring in litter pick-up through Youth Corps or convicts or others. The object is to make sure there are no couches or debris along the side of the road, so that when people come to Washington, they are not greeted with garbage along the side of the road.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Fortunato, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.