

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8019

As of February 5, 2020

Brief Description: Requesting Congress to address volcano early warning and monitoring.

Sponsors: Senators Lias, Wagoner, Hobbs, Becker, Saldaña, Wellman, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/05/20.

Brief Summary of Joint Memorial

- Requests that Congress approve a five-year management plan for the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System funds and establish a committee to implement them as soon as possible.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

Background: Congress passed the John D. Dingell Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Act), effective March 12, 2019. Section 5001 of the Act established the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System (System) to monitor, warn, and protect citizens of the United States from volcanic activity. The secretary, acting through the director of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) must submit a five-year management plan for establishing and operating the System. It must be submitted no later than 180 days after the date of enactment of the Act and include:

- annual cost estimates for modernization activities and operation of the System;
- annual milestones, standards, and performance goals; and
- recommendations for, and progress towards, establishing new, or enhancing existing, partnerships to leverage resources.

Under the Act, \$55 million is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal years 2019 through 2023 with the objective to monitor all volcanoes in the United States at a level commensurate with the threat posed by the volcanoes by:

- upgrading existing networks on monitored volcanoes;
- installing new networks on unmonitored volcanoes; and

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- employing geodetic and other components, when applicable.

The 2018 update to the USGS national volcanic threat assessment includes 161 active or potentially active volcanoes in the United States identifying 18 volcanoes as a very high threat. A majority of the very high threat volcanoes identified lie in the Cascade Range spanning Washington, Oregon, and Northern California.

Summary of Joint Memorial: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Joint Memorial (Proposed Substitute): The Legislature urges Congress to:

- mandate that the USGS submit a five-year management plan for the use of these funds in areas of high need, such as the Cascades;
- establish a committee to implement them as soon as possible; and
- approve the submitted plan within a reasonable time frame so that preventable loss of life, property, and shelter can be avoided to the fullest extent possible in the event of future eruptions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Proposed Substitute: PRO: Of the ten most dangerous active volcanoes in the United States, seven of them are in our state and only one of those is being adequately monitored. While Mt. Rainier and Mt. St. Helens do have some monitoring equipment, Glacier Peak and Mt. Baker have populations surrounding them that are very vulnerable to volcanic hazards and monitoring equipment is sparse to nonexistent. Glacier peak has only 1 seismometer, but needs 12 to be effective according to a recent USGS estimate. Mt. Baker only has two seismometers. Much more instrumentation is needed to adequately monitor the hazards that Washington's volcanos present.

We know that actively monitoring volcanoes saves lives and property, Hawaii for example was able to save all of the lives of the people whose 700 homes were destroyed in 2018 because they had active monitoring. USGS has a draft five-year plan for volcano monitoring that has been submitted to the Department of Interior for review, but we hope that this memorial will help speed this process along to get critical monitoring in place. Congress has acted to appropriate money for monitoring and we ask them to take the next steps to pull together stakeholders to put that funding to work and ensure that Washington citizens are adequately protected from this potential threat.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Casey Hanell, State Geologist, Washington Geological Survey, Department of Natural Resources.

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