
HOUSE BILL 2765

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Representatives Lekanoff, Ortiz-Self, Boehnke, Chapman, and Slatter

Read first time 01/21/20. Referred to Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating a joint select committee on water;
2 adding a new section to chapter 90.03 RCW; and creating a new
3 section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that management
6 of water resources throughout the state would be improved by aligning
7 the state's laws, policies, and resources with current and forecast
8 needs. Decades of statutory changes that respond to specific water
9 resource issues and court decisions have resulted in a complex and
10 confusing legal environment for water users and for water managers in
11 the department of ecology. A lack of clarity in the state's water
12 policy contributes to reduced certainty and efficiency in the use of
13 public and private resources in water rights administration.

14 (2) The legislature intends to address this situation by creating
15 a joint select committee to develop a statewide water action plan. It
16 is the intent of the legislature to provide state agencies and water
17 users with a cohesive strategy to ensure that the state's water
18 policies provide a clear and effective foundation on which to make
19 sound decisions about allocations of water resources.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 90.03

2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1) A joint select committee on water resource policy is
4 established for the purpose of developing a statewide water action
5 plan that identifies areas of statute, administrative rule, policy,
6 and practice that should be updated, and makes appropriate
7 corresponding strategic policy recommendations, in order to ensure
8 that water resources are appropriately allocated to address current
9 and future statewide needs.

10 (2) The joint select committee consists of two members from each
11 of the two largest caucuses of the senate, appointed by the president
12 of the senate, and two members from each of the two largest caucuses
13 of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the
14 house of representatives.

15 (3) There are two cochair of the joint select committee. One
16 cochair of the joint select committee must be a member of the
17 majority caucus of one chamber of the legislature and one cochair
18 must be a member of the minority caucus of the other chamber of the
19 legislature, as those caucuses existed as of January 13, 2020.

20 (4) The joint select committee shall, by a majority of the
21 members, adopt rules to govern its conduct as may be necessary or
22 appropriate, including reasonable procedures for calling and
23 conducting meetings of the joint select committee, ensuring
24 reasonable advance notice of each meeting, and providing for the
25 right of the public to attend each meeting.

26 (5) The joint select committee shall convene from time to time at
27 the call of one or both of the cochair or upon the request of three
28 or more members of the joint select committee. The joint select
29 committee must meet at least three times each calendar year and the
30 joint select committee is encouraged to hold at least one of its
31 meetings each year at a location outside of Olympia. In even-numbered
32 years, at least one meeting, which must take place no later than
33 September 30th, must include a review of recent progress in the area
34 of water policy and a consideration of water-related policy or
35 budgetary matters to come before the legislature during the upcoming
36 legislative session. Any meeting of the joint select committee must
37 include an opportunity for public comment.

38 (6) The joint select committee has the following
39 responsibilities:

1 (a) To conduct a comprehensive review of water policy, including
2 statutes, case law, administrative rules, policies, and the laws and
3 policies of other states, where appropriate;

4 (b) To engage stakeholders in the joint select committee's
5 deliberations through outreach conducted by the department and
6 reports from the department to the joint select committee;

7 (c) To produce and periodically update a statewide water action
8 plan that identifies areas of statute, administrative rule, policy,
9 and practice that should be updated in order to ensure that water
10 resources are appropriately allocated to meet current and future
11 statewide needs; and

12 (d) As part of the statewide water action plan, to make
13 recommendations to the legislature on budgetary and policy actions
14 related to water resource policy.

15 (7) Policy and budgetary recommendations of the joint select
16 committee must be made by a sixty percent majority of the appointed
17 members of the joint select committee. Minority recommendations that
18 achieve the support of at least three of the appointed members of the
19 joint select committee may also be submitted to the legislature. If a
20 member has not been designated for a position set forth in subsection
21 (2) of this section, that position may not be counted for purposes of
22 determining a quorum.

23 (8) Within existing appropriations, the expenses of the
24 operations of the joint select committee, including the expenses
25 associated with the joint select committee's meetings, must be paid
26 jointly and in equal amounts by the senate and the house of
27 representatives. Joint select committee expenditures are subject to
28 approval by the house executive rules committee and the senate
29 facility and operations committee. Legislative members of the joint
30 select committee are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance
31 with RCW 44.04.120.

32 (9) Staff support for the joint select committee must be provided
33 by the office of program research and senate committee services.

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