

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1067

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
State Government & Tribal Relations

**Title:** An act relating to the state dinosaur.

**Brief Description:** Designating the Sucasaurus rex as the official dinosaur of the state of Washington.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Morgan, Ybarra, Shewmake, Gregerson, Kirby and Ormsby.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government & Tribal Relations: 1/27/21, 1/28/21 [DP].

<p><b>Brief Summary of Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishes the Sucasaurus rex as the state dinosaur.</li></ul>
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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Valdez, Chair; Lekanoff, Vice Chair; Volz, Ranking Minority Member; Dolan and Gregerson.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Graham.

**Staff:** Jason Zolle (786-7124).

**Background:**

Approximately 80 million years ago, dinosaurs roamed much of North America. Although it would still be another 12 million years before Tyrannosaurus rex (T. rex) emerged as one of the largest apex predators of the dinosaur kingdom, other tyrannosaurs were just starting

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to evolve. Tyrannosaurs were just one of many types of theropods: two-legged carnivores such as T. rex and Velociraptor that likely paved the way for birds.

When an 80-million-year-old theropod fossil was found in the San Juan Islands in April 2012 by a group of researchers from the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, it was the first dinosaur fossil discovered in Washington. The fossil was classified as a piece of the theropod's left femur—about 17 inches of what scientists estimate would have been a 4-foot-long leg bone. The fossil was deposited in the Cedar District Formation (Formation). Scientists disagree on where this Formation was located when the theropod died; estimates range from Baja California, Mexico, to Northern California.

In any event, the theropod fossil likely immigrated to present-day Washington as the Formation traveled north tens-of-millions of years ago. The rock eventually became part of Sucia Island, an island in the San Juan Islands that today houses a state park accessible only by watercraft.

In the first academic paper describing the fossil, University of Washington paleontologist Christian Sidor and then-PhD student Brandon Peacock hypothesized that the theropod was likely a tyrannosaur, and they included images comparing the femur to that of a Daspletosaurus. As scientists lack enough of the theropod's bones to classify the species definitively, the theropod to which the femur fossil belonged has been nicknamed the Suciasaurus rex in recognition of the island where it was discovered.

Dinosaur fossils are rare in the Pacific Northwest because active tectonic plate boundaries nearby have resulted in significant geological turmoil. In addition, the dense development of cities in Western Washington has curtailed scientists' ability to dig for fossils. Washington has previously designated the Columbian mammoth as the state fossil. According to many scientists, the state bird—the willow (or American) goldfinch—is also considered a type of theropod. Twelve states and Washington D.C. have official state dinosaurs.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The *Suciasaurus rex* is the state dinosaur of Washington.

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**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.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The idea for this bill came from Elmhurst Elementary School in the Franklin Pierce School District. Students in Ms. Cole's classroom learned that another class had introduced a bill for the state insect, so in honor of their teacher's love for dinosaurs, they researched the issue and selected a state dinosaur. But this bill is about more than a dinosaur; it is the formal recognition of and appreciation for the hard work and creativity of the students, and it is an example of the power of civic engagement. The bill passed the house with 91 "yeas" last session. State symbols instill pride and ownership in state citizens and allow Washingtonians to identify with the area they call home. *Suciasaurus rex* is just a nickname for the dinosaur, as scientists do not have enough of the specimen preserved to determine its genus and species. But the *Suciasaurus rex* is certainly a carnivore, and carnivores are the best kind of dinosaur.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Morgan, prime sponsor; Erich Ebel, Washington Our Home; Henry Shewmake-Hutchison; Christian Sidor, Burke Museum; Athena Tauscher; Lisa Lantz and Owen Rowe, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; and Jaylynn Diaz, Elmhurst Elementary.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.