
Environment & Energy Committee

HJR 4209

Brief Description: Adding a new section to the Washington state Constitution regarding the conservation and protection of the state's natural resources.

Sponsors: Representatives Lekanoff and Berry.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Amends the state Constitution to provide that the people of the state have the right to a clean and healthy environment, that the state shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of the state, and that the state shall equitably protect these rights for all people.

Hearing Date: 2/1/22

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

Amending the State Constitution.

The state Constitution provides a method for the adoption of amendments to the Constitution. In order to amend the Constitution, a joint resolution must be passed by a two-thirds majority of both houses of the Legislature. To be enacted, the proposed amendment must be placed on the next general election ballot and must be approved by a simple majority of the voters.

The Constitution requires two methods of publicity for proposed constitutional amendments. The first is a requirement that the Secretary of State send a copy of the proposed amendment, with arguments for and against the proposal, to every residence in the state. The second is a requirement that notice of the proposed amendment be published in every legal newspaper in the state at least four times during the four weeks preceding the election.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill:

An amendment is proposed to Article I of the Constitution of the State of Washington by adding a new section to provide that the people of the state, including future generations, have the right to a clean and healthy environment, including pure water, clean air, healthy ecosystems, and a stable climate, and to the preservation of the natural, cultural, scenic, and healthful qualities of the environment.

The amendment would further provide that the state, including each political subdivision of the state, shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of the state, among them its waters, air, flora, fauna, soils, and climate. The state, including each subdivision of the state, must conserve, protect, and maintain these resources for the benefit of all the people, including generations yet to come.

Finally, the amendment would provide that the rights established by the amendment are inherent, inalienable, and inalienable, are among those rights reserved to all the people, and are on par with other protected inalienable rights. The state, including each political subdivision of the state, shall equitably protect these rights for all people regardless of their race, ethnicity, geography, or wealth, and shall act with prudence, loyalty, impartiality, and equitable treatment of all beneficiaries in fulfilling its trustee obligations.

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.