

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5673

---

---

As of February 13, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to the forest practices board.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the forest practices board.

**Sponsors:** Senators Short and Van De Wege.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/13/23.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Changes the Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Ecology from voting to non-voting members of the 13 member Forest Practices Board.

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

**Staff:** Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

**Background:** The Forest Practices Board (Board) is an independent state agency chaired by the Commissioner of Public Lands (Commissioner) or the Commissioner's designee. The Board, established by the 1974 Forest Practices Act, adopts rules that establish minimum standards for forest practices in Washington, provides procedures for the voluntary development of resource management plans, establishes procedures for the collection and administration of forest practices fees, and allows for the development of watershed analyses.

The Board consists of 13 members, including eight who are appointed by the Governor for four year terms. Membership on the Board includes:

- the Commissioner of Public Lands or the Commissioner's designee;

---

*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.*

- the Director of the Department of Commerce or the Director's designee;
- the Director of the Department of Agriculture or the Director's designee;
- the Director of the Department of Ecology or the Director's designee;
- the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife or the Director's designee;
- an elected member of a county legislative authority appointed by the Governor;
- one member representing a timber products union, appointed by the Governor from a list of three names submitted by a timber labor coalition affiliated with a statewide labor organization that represents a majority of the timber product unions in the state; and
- six members of the general public appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be a small forestland owner who actively manages his or her land, and one of whom shall be an independent logging contractor.

**Summary of Bill:** Three members of the 13 member Forest Practices Board are changed from voting to non-voting members including the Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Ecology.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This will preserve the collaborative, problem-solving process that has worked for years on the Forest Practices Board (Board). Collaboration is undermined when state agencies meet behind the scenes and pre-decide their votes, rather than act as independent, objective individuals. Voting as a block upsets the balance that is required at the Board. Without member independence, it is pointless for small landowners to take their concerns to the Board. The Board has focused on process over results. We need to move from process based rules to focus on results.

CON: There appears to have been a change in practice at the Board. This bill shines a light on the action taken by the Board last fall. The Board needs to act in an independent and collaborative manner, with agencies independently representing their views.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Shelly Short, Prime Sponsor; Elaine Oneil, WFFA; Ken Miller, Washington Farm Forestry Association.

CON: Tom Davis, Washington Forest Protection Association.

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