

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5677

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
State Government & Elections, February 17, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to recognizing Walla Walla sweet onion day.

**Brief Description:** Recognizing Walla Walla sweet onion day.

**Sponsors:** Senators Dozier, Fortunato, Boehnke, Torres, McCune, Schoesler, Short, King, Braun, Holy, Wilson, L., Muzzall, Wilson, J., Wagoner, Cleveland, Dhingra, Kuderer, Lovelett, Lovick, Nobles, Rivers, Rolfes, Saldaña, Shewmake, Stanford, Valdez, Warnick and Wellman.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government & Elections: 2/14/23, 2/17/23 [DP].

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brief Summary of Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognizes July 10th of each year as Walla Walla Sweet Onion Day.</li></ul>
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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier, Fortunato, Hasegawa and Kuderer.

**Staff:** Danielle Creech (786-7412)

**Background:** The Walla Walla Sweet onion is grown in Walla Walla County, but finds its origins on the island of Corsica. Over a century ago, a retired French soldier named Peter Pieri found a sweet onion seed there and brought it to the Walla Walla Valley. The sweet onion had impressive winter hardiness well-suited for the climate of southeastern Washington. Soon Pieri and many Italian immigrants in the area began harvesting the seed. Over several generations of careful hand selection, the sweet onion developed greater

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*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.*

sweetness, size, and shape.

Today, there are approximately 18 growers producing Walla Walla Sweet onions on 400 acres of farmland in the Walla Walla Valley. Approximately 32,500 pounds of Walla Walla onions are harvested per acre each year. Walla Walla onions are one of the only non-hybrid sweet onions that are members of the *Amaryllidaceae* family. These onions are only allowed to be labeled as Walla Walla if they meet specific quality regulations, and are grown in the designated region. Sweet onion season is mid-June through August, and, since 1984, Walla Walla has celebrated the Sweet Onion Festival every July.

**Summary of Bill:** July 10th of each year will be recognized as Walla Walla Sweet Onion Day.

**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: Sweet onions have a long history in Walla Walla. Walla Walla is the only location capable of growing the specific Walla Walla onion, and it is a unique Washington asset worthy of celebration. This bill will declare July 10th the Walla Walla sweet onion day, as this day is in their peak season.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Perry Dozier, Prime Sponsor.

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