

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5921

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks, January 18, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to tribal representation on the state conservation commission.

**Brief Description:** Concerning tribal representation on the state conservation commission.

**Sponsors:** Senators Stanford, Van De Wege, Conway, Hasegawa, Liias, Nguyen, Nobles, Trudeau and Valdez; by request of Conservation Commission.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/11/24, 1/18/24 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Specifies that one of the members of the State Conservation Commission appointed by the Governor shall be a member or representative from a federally recognized tribe.

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

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Van De Wege, Chair; Salomon, Vice Chair; Muzzall, Ranking Member; Liias, Shewmake, Short, Stanford, Wagoner and Warnick.

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

**Background:** The Conservation Commission (Commission) is a state agency created to assist and guide conservation districts in preparing and implementing resource conservation programs. The Commission provides informational and technical assistance to conservation districts throughout Washington. The Commission also recommends and administers

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funding, distributes funds to conservation districts, and reviews conservation district budgets and annual reports.

The Commission is governed by a ten member board consisting of Governor appointees, other state agencies, and conservation districts. The Governor appoints two members, one of whom must be a land owner or farm operator, who serve four-year terms. Three Commission board members are elected by the conservation district supervisors, and at least two must be land owners or farm operators. The elected members serve three-year terms. The other five members serve as ex-officio members of the Commission including the Director of the Department of Ecology, the Director of the Department of Agriculture; the Commissioner of Public Lands; the President of the Washington Association of Conservation Districts; and the Dean of the College of Agriculture at Washington State University.

**Summary of Bill:** One of the members of the State Conservation Commission appointed by the Governor must be a member or representative from a federally recognized tribe.

**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 bill request by the Commission would place in statute what has been in practice for the past 24 years. Previous Governors have appointed a tribal member to the Commission. By having representation on the Commission, it develops government to government relationships to protect and manage land and resources. Much of the work done by the Commission impacts tribal members, and by putting into statute what has been in practice for many years, this work can continue.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Derek Stanford, Prime Sponsor; Jarred-Michael Erickson, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; James Thompson, Washington State Conservation Commission; Daryl Williams, Tulalip Tribes.

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