

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5234

As of February 10, 2025

Title: An act relating to snowmobile registration fees.

Brief Description: Concerning snowmobile registration fees.

Sponsors: Senators Shewmake and Nobles; by request of Parks and Recreation Commission.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/20/25, 1/30/25 [DP-WM, DNP, w/oRec].
Ways & Means: 2/10/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the annual registration fee for snowmobiles from \$50 to \$75.
- Increases the annual registration fee for vintage snowmobiles from \$12 to \$18.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Lias, Chair; Lovick, Vice Chair; Ramos, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Member; Alvarado, Chapman, Cortes, Harris, Krishnadasan, Nobles and Shewmake.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Christian, Fortunato and MacEwen.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Holy and Wilson, J..

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

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.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Kimmy Eide (786-7471)

Background: Snowmobiles operating in the state must be registered with the Department of Licensing and must display a snowmobile decal. The annual registration fee for snowmobiles is \$50.

A vintage snowmobile is defined as a snowmobile that was manufactured at least 30 years ago. The annual registration fee for vintage snowmobiles is \$12.

The registration fees are deposited in the Snowmobile Account which is used for snowmobile-related programs and activities.

In addition to the annual registration fee, a vintage snowmobile registration transaction is also subject to the following annual fees:

- an \$8 registration service fee which, depending on where the transaction occurs, is deposited into the Capital Vessel Replacement Account or is retained by a licensing subagent;
- a \$4.50 filing fee which is usually distributed to the county where the transaction occurs for deposit in their general fund;
- a \$0.50 license service fee which is deposited in the Department of Licensing Services Account; and
- a \$0.25 license plate technology fee which is deposited in the License Plate Technology Account.

Summary of Bill: Beginning September 30, 2025, the annual registration fee for snowmobiles is increased from \$50 to \$75, and the annual registration fee for vintage snowmobiles is increased from \$12 to \$18.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 (Transportation): PRO: The current fee structure supporting sno-parks and trails is no longer sustainable. There is growing consensus that additional resource are needed to achieve the appropriate levels of trail maintenance, improvements, and enforcement. This is a fee-for-service program and it makes sense to increase the fee to get funding to the appropriate levels. The registration fee was last increased in 2016. The snowmobile community largely supports this fee increase as we

attempt to find the right size for the current program. A decline in snowmobile registration and inflationary pressures has added to the problem.

CON: The program is on a downward trajectory. Part of the reason for this revenue shortfall is associated with declining snowmobile registrations which also impacts the amount of fuel tax distributions. This new fee will push us to extinction. The sno-park advisory committee is investigating these issues, and there needs to be comprehensive review before any kind of fee increase goes into effect.

OTHER: DOL is currently applying \$225 in additional fees on electric snowmobiles. It does not make sense that this additional charge is being imposed on snowmobiles that are much better for the environment than their gasoline counterparts. This should be fixed in this legislation.

Persons Testifying (Transportation): PRO: Senator Sharon Shewmake, Prime Sponsor; Peter Herzog, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

CON: Greg Figg, Spokane Winter Knights Snowmobile club.

OTHER: Rick Ingham, Meany Lodge.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Transportation): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: The snowmobile registration fee was last increased in 2016, and since that time, there has been a reduction in registrations while the cost of maintaining snow parks has increased. Revenues have not kept pace with expenditures, and revenues would need to double to maintain 2002 service levels. Snow parks maintenance depends on high dollar equipment and services which contribute a significant economic value to rural communities. Snowmobilers have left the sport due to inadequate grooming. In a survey of snowmobilers, with 1300 responding, 66 percent agreed with a fee increase. Washington State Snowmobile Association has ten district representatives, and the majority are in favor of the \$25 increase.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Fred Wemer; Brian Considine, State Parks, Policy & Gov't Affairs Director; Justin Davis; Cory Wright, Kittitas County Commissioner; Dean Meakin, Washington State Snowmobile Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.