

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5489

As of February 18, 2025

Title: An act relating to the designation of the state sandstone.

Brief Description: Establishing a state sandstone.

Sponsors: Senator Fortunato.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections: 2/18/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates Wilkeson Sandstone as the official sandstone of the state of Washington.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL AFFAIRS & ELECTIONS

Staff: William Bridges (786-7312)

Background: Sandstone. Sandstone is a sedimentary rock mainly composed of silicate grains, cemented together by another mineral, such as quartz or calcite. It has been quarried and used for construction and art over many millennia.

Sandstone has been quarried in Wilkeson, Washington since the mid 1800's. According to W.P. Bonney's History of Pierce County, Wilkeson Sandstone was "pronounced by competent authorities to be superior to any other sandstone in this country" because it did "not absorb water and is so recognized by the United States government in the fact that it is the only sandstone that does not require to be waterproofed."

In his book, Washington's Audacious State Capital and Its Builders, Norman J. Johnston described Wilkeson Sandstone as "light, warm, off-white tones with shadings of pale cream

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and hints of pink." On "sunny days," he wrote, "it is light but not harsh, nor does it turn gloomy on gray days or in the rain." Because of these aesthetic qualities and its availability in sufficient amounts, Wilkeson Sandstone was used to grace many buildings in the state, such as Washington's Capitol and Temple of Justice.

State Symbols. The Washington Legislature has designated several official state symbols, such as a state fruit—apple, state vegetable—Walla Walla sweet onion, state fossil—Columbian mammoth of North America, state waterfall—Palouse Falls, and state gem—petrified wood.

Summary of Bill: Wilkeson Sandstone is designated as the official sandstone of the state of Washington.

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: In 1925, the state did not pay a bill of \$56,000 owed to the Wilkeson sandstone quarry for work related to the Legislative Building. The Town of Wilkeson paid the bill and sought recovery from the state. There is no evidence the state paid the bill, and the town sought recompense from the state around 2018. At that time, the bill was \$5 million because of accumulated interest. In lieu of humorously repossessing columns of the Legislative Building, town leaders have offered to settle the debt for a plaque on the Legislative Building noting the sandstone is of Wilkeson origin. Recognizing Wilkeson sandstone as the official state sandstone is part of the effort to educate the public on the excellent qualities of the sandstone and its use on many of the buildings on the state capital campus.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Phil Fortunato, Prime Sponsor.

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