
SENATE BILL 5108

State of Washington

60th Legislature

2007 Regular Session

By Senators Haugen, Rasmussen, Jacobsen, Shin, Spanel, Swecker, Brandland, Hatfield and Parlette

Read first time 01/10/2007. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to farmland preservation; adding a new chapter to
2 Title 89 RCW; and providing an expiration date.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** FINDINGS AND PURPOSE. The legislature finds
5 that maintaining the capacity to provide adequate food and fiber
6 resources is essential to the long-term sustainability of the state's
7 citizens and economy. The nation's population has reached three
8 hundred million and will continue to increase for the foreseeable
9 future. Further, the world population is now over six billion and is
10 projected to reach nine billion by the year 2050.

11 In Washington state, the population is growing by over one million
12 people every decade with much of this growth occurring in western
13 Washington. This growth is increasing the competition for land not
14 only for housing, but also associated retail, commercial, industrial,
15 and leisure industries.

16 The legislature finds that many once-productive agricultural areas
17 in western Washington have been overtaken and irreversibly converted to
18 nonagricultural uses. Other agricultural areas in the state have
19 diminished to the point that they are dangerously close to losing the

1 land mass necessary to be economically viable. Further, only a limited
2 number of areas in western Washington still retain a sufficient
3 agricultural land base and the necessary agricultural infrastructure to
4 continue to be economically viable both in the short term and the long
5 term.

6 The legislature recognizes that because this significant decline
7 has largely occurred in less than a half century, it is imperative that
8 mechanisms be established at the state level to focus attention, take
9 the action needed to retain agricultural land, and ensure the
10 opportunity for future generations to farm these lands.

11 The legislature finds that history shows that previous advanced
12 civilizations in the world were founded on highly productive
13 agricultural lands and food production systems but when the land or its
14 productivity was lost, the civilizations declined. In contrast, other
15 civilizations have existed for millennia because they maintained their
16 agricultural land base, its productivity, and economic conditions
17 sufficient to maintain stewardship of their land.

18 The legislature finds that there is a finite quantity of high
19 quality agricultural land and that often this agricultural land is
20 mistakenly viewed as an expendable resource. The legislature finds
21 that the retention of agricultural land is desirable, not only to
22 produce food and other products, but also to maintain our state economy
23 and preferable environmental conditions. For these reasons, and
24 because it is essential that agricultural production be sufficient to
25 meet the needs of our growing population, commitment to the retention
26 of agricultural land should be reflected at the state policy level by
27 the creation of an office of farmland preservation to support the
28 retention of farmland and the viability of farming for future
29 generations.

30 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION--POWERS AND
31 DUTIES. (1) The office of farmland preservation is created and shall
32 be located within the state conservation commission.

33 (2) Staff support for the office shall be provided by the state
34 conservation commission.

35 (3) The office of farmland preservation may:

36 (a) Provide advice and assist the state conservation commission in
37 implementing the provisions of RCW 89.08.530 and 89.08.540;

1 (b) Develop recommendations for the funding level of the
2 agricultural conservation easements account established in RCW
3 89.08.540 with the guidance of the farmland preservation task force
4 established under section 3 of this act;

5 (c) Provide an analysis of the major factors that have led to past
6 declines in the amount and use of agricultural lands in Washington and
7 of the factors that will likely affect retention and viability of these
8 lands into the future including, but not limited to, pressures to
9 convert land to nonagricultural uses, loss of processing plants and
10 markets, loss of competitive advantage, urban sprawl, and conversion to
11 recreational or other uses;

12 (d) Develop model programs and tools to retain agricultural land
13 for agricultural production, with the guidance from the farmland
14 preservation task force created under section 3 of this act;

15 (e) Provide technical assistance to localities as they develop and
16 implement programs, mechanisms, and tools to encourage the retention of
17 agricultural lands;

18 (f) Develop a grant process and an eligibility certification
19 process for localities to receive grants for local programs and tools
20 to retain agricultural lands for agricultural production;

21 (g) Begin the development of a farm transition program to assist in
22 the transition of farmland and related businesses from one generation
23 to the next, aligning the farm transition program closely with the
24 farmland preservation effort to assure complementary functions; and

25 (h) Provide analysis and recommendations as to the continued
26 development and implementation of the farm transition program
27 including, but not limited to, recommending:

28 (i) Assistance in the preparation of business plans for the
29 transition of business interests;

30 (ii) Assistance in the facilitation of transfers of existing
31 properties and agricultural operations to interested buyers; and

32 (iii) Research assistance on agricultural, financial, marketing,
33 and other related transition matters.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** FARMLAND PRESERVATION TASK FORCE. (1) The
35 farmland preservation task force is established with the following
36 voting members:

1 (a) Six farmer representatives, one from each of six regions
2 delineated by the state conservation commission, of which at least two
3 representatives shall be under the age of forty-five, appointed by the
4 governor from persons nominated by recognized agricultural
5 organizations;

6 (b) A representative of the state conservation commission,
7 appointed by the chair of the state conservation commission;

8 (c) A representative of the department of agriculture, appointed by
9 the director;

10 (d) A representative of counties in eastern Washington, appointed
11 by the Washington state association of counties;

12 (e) A representative of counties in western Washington, appointed
13 by the Washington state association of counties;

14 (f) Two members of the senate, one from each major political
15 caucus, appointed by the president of the senate;

16 (g) Two members of the house of representatives, one from each
17 major political caucus, appointed by the speaker of the house of
18 representatives;

19 (h) A representative of the office of the governor, appointed by
20 the governor; and

21 (i) A representative of conservation districts, appointed by the
22 state association of conservation districts.

23 (2) The following persons shall be requested to participate as
24 nonvoting members of the farmland preservation task force:

25 (a) A representative of the federal natural resources conservation
26 service with knowledge of federal agricultural land retention programs
27 and funding sources, appointed by the state conservationist; and

28 (b) A person with technical expertise from the department of
29 community, trade, and economic development, appointed by the agency's
30 director.

31 (3) The task force shall meet at least twice a year. The task
32 force shall be staffed by the state conservation commission. The chair
33 of the task force shall be elected for a term of one year by the voting
34 members of the task force.

35 (4) Nonlegislative members of the task force are entitled to be
36 reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and
37 43.03.060 by the state conservation commission. Legislative members of

1 the task force are entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses in
2 accordance with RCW 44.04.120.

3 (5) This section expires January 1, 2011.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** CAPTIONS NOT LAW. Captions used in this act
5 are not any part of the law.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Sections 1 through 4 of this act constitute
7 a new chapter in Title 89 RCW.

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