

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2EHB 2207

As Passed House:
March 12, 2014

Title: An act relating to eliminating the reduction in state basic education funding that occurs in counties with federal forest lands.

Brief Description: Eliminating the reduction in state basic education funding that occurs in counties with federal forest lands.

Sponsors: Representatives Haigh, Orcutt, Haler, Tharinger, Blake, Short, Van De Wege, Fagan, Magendanz and Buys.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations Subcommittee on Education: 1/22/14, 1/29/14 [DPS];

Appropriations: 2/10/14, 3/1/14 [DP2S(w/o sub APPE)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/12/14, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Second Engrossed Bill

- Partially eliminates the reduction of federal forest revenues from school district basic education allocations for school districts that have a poverty level of at least 57 percent. Districts meeting the poverty threshold may retain up to \$70,000.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Fagan, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Dahlquist, Haler, Lytton, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Sullivan and Wilcox.

Staff: Jessica Harrell (786-7349).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Carlyle, Cody, Dunshee, Fagan, Green, Haigh, Hudgins, S. Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Morrell, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Springer, Sullivan and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Ross, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Christian, Dahlquist, Haler, Harris, G. Hunt, Parker, Schmick and Taylor.

Staff: Jessica Harrell (786-7349).

Background:

Over 21 percent of all of Washington land is in national forests. These lands are exempt from local property tax. The federal government shares a portion of the revenues from the management of these lands with public schools, universities, community colleges, and state institutions. The majority of the revenues are derived from the harvest of timber. The amount of funds varies greatly from year to year, depending on the harvesting activities in the federal forestlands within the various counties. It is additionally dependent on the federal reauthorization of the distribution of the revenues.

The federal government currently pays 25 percent of revenues from federal forest lands to the state. Per federal statute, the state Legislature determines how these revenues are spent for benefit of public schools and roads in the affected counties. Per state statute, 50 percent of the revenues are distributed to counties for roads and the remaining 50 percent is allocated to school districts within those counties. For counties in which there is more than one school district, the funds are distributed in proportion to the number of full-time equivalent students in each respective district.

General apportionment is the primary means by which basic education funding is allocated to school districts. The basic education rate is the per pupil allocation provided to districts for a general education student, and is the foundation of the general apportionment budget. State basic education funding to school districts in counties with federal forest lands is reduced by an amount equal to the federal forest revenue that the district receives. The total estimated federal forest revenue to be distributed to school districts in fiscal year 2014 is approximately \$8.3 million.

Summary of Second Engrossed Bill:

The reduction of districts' basic education allocations that offsets the receipt of the federal forest fund revenues is partially eliminated. The Superintendent of Public Instruction may continue to offset general apportionment allocations with federal forest revenues only for districts with poverty that is less than 57 percent. For districts with poverty levels of at least 57 percent, the Superintendent of Public Instruction may offset only the portion of the general apportionment allocations that exceed \$70,000.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on September 1, 2014.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education):

(In support) This legislation would be one more step toward fully funding the state's paramount duty. Washington is the only state that reduces state allocations to districts by an amount equal to the federal forest revenue. Most of the districts affected are small, rural districts with few other resources for raising local revenue. Permitting districts to keep this revenue without offsetting the general apportionment allocations would enable districts to expand services to students. The purpose of the federal forest revenues is to make up for the loss of revenue from removing the federal forest lands from economic development. Making this change is the fair thing to do for the school districts affected by the loss of this resource.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) The timber funds were intended to offset the losses in tax base with the creation of the U.S. National Forest, created by President Roosevelt. The deductions to basic education allocations begin shortly after the Doran School Funding decision. These funds are similar to the federal impact aid, which are not deducted from the basic education allocation. If the timber revenue funds could be retained, schools could hire additional teachers, mental health counselors, or other staff that would support the academic achievement of students at risk.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education): William Clark, Washington State School Directors' Association; Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, Mount Baker School District; Neal Kirby, Centralia School District; Michael Howe, Sequim School District; Jim Kowalkowski, Davenport School District; and Paul Turner, Tonasket School District.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Neal Kirby, Centralia School District; Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, Mount Baker School District; and Tom Churchill, Meridian School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.