

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5889

As Passed House:
March 5, 2014

Title: An act relating to snowmobile license fees.

Brief Description: Modifying snowmobile license fees.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nelson, Schlicher, Fain, Hatfield, Hewitt, Fraser and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/24/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/5/14, 75-23.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Raises the snowmobile annual registration and renewal fee to \$40 for registrations due on October 1, 2014, until October 1, 2015.
- Raises the snowmobile annual registration and renewal fee to \$50 for registrations due on or after October 1, 2015.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Ross, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Cody, Dahlquist, Dunshee, Fagan, Green, Haigh, Hudgins, S. Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Morrell, Pettigrew, Schmick, Seaquist, Springer, Sullivan and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Buys, Christian, Haler, Harris, G. Hunt, Parker and Taylor.

Staff: Dan Jones (786-7118).

Background:

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.

In 1971 the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) implemented the Snowmobile Act by entering into agreements with other agencies, organizations, and individuals to: (1) remove snow from parking areas; (2) groom trails; (3) provide sanitation, education and enforcement, equipment, and administration; and (4) certify volunteer instructors to provide safety training classes.

The Commission administers the Snowmobile Program with funds appropriated from the Snowmobile Account. The Snowmobile Account is funded from two primary sources: (1) a snowmobile annual registration fee; and (2) 23 cents per gallon of fuel, based on 135 gallons of fuel usage per year per registered snowmobile distributed as a gas tax refund. The Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) advises the Commission on the use of funds and on the planned development of snowmobile facilities and programs. The SAC is made up of snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, and representatives from the Washington State Association of Counties and state agencies.

All snowmobiles in the state must be registered annually by the Department of Licensing or a licensing agent. Snowmobile registrations are valid October 1 through September 30 of the following year. The fee currently is set at \$30, the maximum amount statute allows. However, for vintage snowmobiles, defined as being manufactured at least 30 years ago, the fee is \$12 annually.

There were 28,674 snowmobiles registered in the state in 2012, of which 248 were identified as vintage.

Summary of Bill:

The snowmobile registration fee is increased from \$30 to \$40 until October 1, 2015, for registrations due on October 1, 2014. The snowmobile registration fee is increased another \$10 to a total of \$50, effective for registrations due on or after October 1, 2015. The vintage snowmobile registration fee is unchanged.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 2 relating to snowmobile registrations, which takes effect October 1, 2015.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The State Parks and Recreation Commission's snowmobile program relies on funding from snowmobile registration fees for trail grooming, snow removal, and sanitation for the public. The registration fee has not been increased since 2002, and the snowmobile program has not been able to keep up with increases in the cost of fuel and the cost of doing business.

In 2012 the Snowmobile Association (Association) conducted a survey of its members about options for sustainable funding. Fifty-seven percent of Association members supported a fee increase, and the Association came up with the fee structure in this bill. Snowmobilers spend a lot of money and are passionate about their sport. Without the fee increases in this bill, the snowmobile program will be on life support.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Pamela McConkey, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; and Sandy Sternod, Washington State Snowmobile Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.