

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6297

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, February 1, 1996

Title: An act relating to the creation, operation, and management of boards of joint control.

Brief Description: Providing for modifications to the creation and operation of irrigation district joint control boards.

Sponsors: Senators Newhouse, Loveland, Rasmussen, A. Anderson, Morton, Deccio, Hochstatter, Hale, Prince and Sellar.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 1/22/96, 2/1/96 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Goings, Hale, Heavey, McCaslin and Winsley.

Staff: Katie Healy (786-7403)

Background: A board of joint control may be created to operate, maintain and regulate two or more irrigation districts. There is a desire to improve operating efficiencies and management of scarce water resources.

Summary of Bill: More specificity is given as to what a board of joint control may do, including construction of joint use facilities. Definitions are provided for terms relevant to joint irrigation districts.

Clarification is made with regard to the entities who sign the petition to create a joint board. The provision is deleted requiring the signatures of the entire membership of the board of directors of an irrigation district.

The petition describes the relationship of the irrigation entities to a federal reclamation project and the primary water works of the entities. The petition also provides for the formula for apportionment of costs among the members of the joint board. It may also propose the composition of the board. If approved, the county commissioners must appoint the joint board based on the board composition proposed in the petition.

The owners of land not located in the irrigation district concerned with, but whose land may be affected by the actions of the irrigation district, are no longer permitted to designate a person to represent their interests to the joint board. An alternative voting structure is permitted if proposed in the petition and adopted in the county commissioners' resolution.

Provision is made for compensating the board members, which amount is fixed by resolution.

The joint board is authorized to accept funding, and is given more flexibility to perform certain functions, such as design, construction or operation of projects. The board may accept operation responsibility for federal reserved works if the board area of jurisdiction is completely within a federal reclamation project. The joint board is authorized to pursue conservation and system efficiency improvements to appropriately manage scarce water resources.

A treasurer other than the county treasurer may be designated to collect assessments and distribute collections. When the county treasurer serves as the board's treasurer, vouchers for operations are issued.

A new section is added limiting the persons who may sit on the board. If this statute is in conflict with a federal contract, the county commissioners must deny the irrigation districts' proposed participation.

Technical changes are made to the statute.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill coordinates the benefits for water districts with senior water rights with districts having junior water rights. This bill addresses ways of improving dialogue and coordinating facilities. We must find innovative approaches to manage scarce resources. We're looking for solutions to water problems in the Yakima valley basin.

Testimony Against: There are concerns about how this will affect tribal fishing rights. The Yakima Indian Nation has been meeting with the immigration districts regarding assurance about water transfers and resulting impacts on salmon.

Testified: Douglas Simpson, SUID/Simpson Bros. Farms (pro); Jim Halstrom, Roza Irrigation District (pro); Dawn Vyvyan, Yakima Nation (con).