

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5492

As Passed Senate, March 11, 1997

Title: An act relating to a rural development council.

Brief Description: Establishing a rural development council.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Senators Loveland, Sellar, Prince and Hale; by request of Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/26/97, 2/27/97, 3/3/97 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 3/11/97, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5492 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Schow, Chair; Horn, Vice Chair; Anderson, Franklin, Fraser and Heavey.

Staff: Patrick Woods (786-7430)

Background: During the decade of the '80s and into the '90s, much of rural Washington experienced economic distress and population decline as compared to the rapidly growing Puget Sound region. The reasons for the dramatic disparity between the two regions of the state are primarily due to the challenges facing natural resource based industries such as timber and fishing, as compared to the significant growth opportunities in aerospace and technology.

In response to this period of rural recession, a series of state programs were established or expanded to specifically address the array of problems facing rural communities. A number of state agencies have responsibilities for administering rural distressed area- programs. In addition, numerous federal and local government agencies along with nonprofit entities actively participate in rural development activities.

In 1990, the federal government established, by presidential initiative, the Rural Development Council, which is comprised of representatives from the federal, state, local and tribal governments, along with private and nonprofit sectors in an effort to promote coordination in rural economic development efforts. Washington was one of the pilot project states in the implementation of this federal initiative.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Rural Development Council is recognized in state statute. The council is governed by an executive committee made up of 11 members appointed by the Governor that represent the following sectors: business; natural resources;

agriculture; environment; economic development; education; health; human services; counties; cities; and tribal government. The following federal and state agencies are ex-officio, voting members of the council: U.S. Department of Agriculture; State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; and all state and federal agencies and statewide associations that make a significant financial contribution to the Rural Development Council.

The council's mission is to improve the delivery and accessibility of public and private resources to meet the needs of rural communities.

The council is directed to: provide state, local and federal officials with the rural perspective on economic development issues; make recommendations on ways to improve the economic development service delivery system; and serve as a liaison between rural communities and public and private service delivery entities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 21, 1997.

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

Testimony For: The council will help rural communities by providing needed policy and program advice to state and federal agencies.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Loveland, prime sponsor; Ellen Hagey, Rural Development Council; Tom DiDomenico, Benton-Franklin Regional Council; Wanda Stenzel, Rural Development Council; Donovan Gray, Network for Local Arts in Washington State; Terry Vann, Washington Independent Telephone Association; Andy Davidson, Washington State Hospital Association.