

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5228

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, February 1, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to the health effects of noise.

**Brief Description:** Requiring a study of the health effects of noise.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles, Patterson and Thibaudeau.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 1/28/99, 2/1/99 [DP-WM].  
Ways & Means: 3/4/99.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; Costa, Deccio, Franklin, Johnson and Winsley.

**Staff:** Christopher Blake (786-7446)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Brian Sims (786-7431)

**Background:** A study in the *American Journal of Public Health* reported that during the 1990s community noise levels in the United States increased by 11 percent. Excessive noise has been linked to various health problems. Extended periods of high volume noise can cause both temporary and permanent hearing loss. Noise can impact the quality of one's sleep which, in turn, can lead to hypertension and affect psychological processes including memory. One study has even noted lower classroom performance in schools located in loud environments.

The Noise Control Act of 1974 gives the Department of Ecology the authority to adopt rules setting maximum noise levels in order to protect against adverse affects of noise on the health, safety and welfare of the people.— Ecology is directed to review local ordinances for consistency with its rules regarding noise. Ecology, however, has not been able to enforce the act for several years due to a lack of funds.

Despite Ecology's inability to review local ordinances, some local governments have implemented noise control laws. In 1996 San Juan County passed an ordinance prohibiting the use of jet-skis. Among the reasons for the ban the county noted the disturbance to others that the noise emissions from these vehicles causes. Last year the Washington State Supreme Court upheld this ordinance as a reasonable use of the county's police power. The city of

Seattle also has noise ordinances and the Seattle Police Department receives over 13,000 noise-related complaints every year.

**Summary of Bill:** Legislative findings regarding noise levels are made. The Department of Health is directed to perform an analysis of the health effects of noise and report its findings and recommendations for reducing any impacts to the Legislature by January 1, 2000. The department is instructed to: review the literature that discusses auditory and other health effects of noise; assess the principal sources of noise in Washington communities; review federal, state, and local noise control laws and programs; determine the impact of unhealthy noise levels on disadvantaged groups; and recommend improvements for state and local noise control programs. The department must establish an advisory committee consisting of representatives from community organizations concerned with noise, high-noise industries, motor vehicle manufacturers, transportation facilities, and scientific research. Forty-five thousand dollars is appropriated to the department from the general fund for this project.

**Appropriation:** \$45,000.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 22, 1999.

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

**Testimony For:** As Washington State becomes more urbanized, there is a need for a more complete understanding of the health effects of noise. New standards for determining noise disturbance and new quiet technologies can be used for crafting legislative solutions for a quieter environment. Caveats were issued that good science must be used, economic impact must be considered, and labor must be represented.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Mike Rees, Magnolia Community Club (pro); Don Parker, University of Washington (pro); Cathryn Vandenbrink, Sound Rights (pro); Heinz Leistner, Sound Rights; Wes Larson, Eastlake Community (pro); Daniel B. Hartley, SPEEA.