

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5435

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Environmental Quality & Water Resources, February 23, 1999

Title: An act relating to the Washington environment 21 commission.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington environment 21 commission.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Eide, Rasmussen, Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Kline and Spanel.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environmental Quality & Water Resources: 2/12/99, 2/23/99 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY & WATER RESOURCES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5435 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Morton and Swecker.

Staff: Richard Ramsey (786-7412)

Background: Washington and other states have sought the strategic guidance of independent commissions that focus on environmental protection. The Department of Ecology's "Environment 2010" conducted in 1990 is Washington's most recent such evaluation.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Washington Environment 21 Commission is created. The commission consists of at least 14 members and lasts for four years. The commission's purpose is to increase reliance upon environmental strategies that emphasize market incentives, pollution prevention, public education, and technical assistance. The major activities of the commission include: reviewing of goals of state environmental laws; evaluating the use of relative risk for prioritizing financial resources; and strengthening the role of science in environmental policy.

The commission must develop a work plan by December 1, 1999.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The number of legislators on the commission is increased from four to eight. The Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife is added to the commission when the commission considers issues related to fish and wildlife and their habitats. "Bubble and offset policies" is changed to "pollution credit trading." The evaluation of tax policy to achieve environmental quality objectives is added. Staff support is required from agencies whose directors participate on the commission and from the Office of the Attorney General.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Promoting the use of incentives to achieve environmental objectives is worthwhile. The commission should examine the tax code for the 412 exemptions and consider tax policy an instrument to achieve environmental objectives.

Testimony Against: Section 7 should be expanded to gather input from more than public sources.

Testified: Eric Espenhorst, Friends of the Earth (pro); Jerry Smedes, NW Environmental Business Council (pro).