

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6256

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As Passed Senate, February 14, 2000

**Title:** An act relating to labeling of state food products.

**Brief Description:** Allowing voluntary food labeling.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rasmussen, Loveland, Morton, Prentice and Stevens.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 1/26/2000, 2/2/2000 [DP].

Passed Senate, 2/14/2000, 45-3.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Gardner, Honeyford, Morton, Prentice, Snyder, Stevens and Swecker.

**Staff:** David Johnson (786-7754)

**Background:** Many other states have adopted marketing programs to identify their products to local and out-of-state consumers. Labeling a state's own products can create a brand that consumers identify with and seek out, thereby increasing market share.

Washington currently has 26 commodity commissions or boards organized to, among other purposes, promote efficient marketing. Some commissions and boards have undertaken "grown in Washington" types of labeling programs.

It is felt that specifically authorizing commodity commissions to initiate the labeling of Washington products as grown in this state will enhance the marketing of such products.

**Summary of Bill:** Several commodity commissions and boards are specifically authorized to initiate, if they choose to do so, programs for consumer labeling of products that are grown in Washington. The Department of Agriculture is authorized to develop similar labeling programs for cultured aquatic products and organic foods, if it wishes to do so. The programs are to be voluntary in nature.

Existing activities of commissions or boards are not affected by this authority. Boards and commissions that currently have labeling programs or requirements are not limited by this act.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Some commodity producers are concerned about their ability to label as Washington grown. This is a good way to promote Washington products. Voluntary nature of authority doesn't burden retailers. We should showcase our products better and this will allow growers to expand their markets. People prefer Washington products. The food industry wants to work with producers and growers on a voluntary program.

**Testimony Against:** Tools to do this already exist; more authority is unnecessary.

**Testified:** PRO: Bob Gee, Doug Henken, Washington Food Industry; Charlie Brown, Washington Potato Commission; Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture.