

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1836

As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to a legislative task force on local park and recreation maintenance and operations.

Brief Description: Creating a legislative task force on local park and recreation maintenance and operations.

Sponsors: Representatives Edwards, Doumit, Sump, Cooper, Haigh, Eickmeyer, Tokuda, Boldt, Dunn, Esser, Lovick and Jackley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/14/01, 2/16/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a legislative task force on local park and recreation maintenance and operations. Membership includes legislators, and representatives of cities, counties, park users, businesses, and the environment.
- Requires the task force to report its findings by December 1, 2001.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Doumit, Democratic Co-Chair; Sump, Republican Co-Chair; Pearson, Republican Vice Chair; Rockefeller, Democratic Vice Chair; Buck, G. Chandler, Edwards, Eickmeyer, Ericksen, Murray and Pennington.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

There is a growing demand by the public for local parks. Although some limited funding is available for park acquisition, development, and renovation, the maintenance and operation of these parks is largely a local government responsibility.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A legislative task force on local park and recreation maintenance and operations is established. The task force is composed of: four members of the state House of Representatives, two from each major caucus, appointed by the co-speakers; four members of the state Senate, two from each major caucus, appointed by the president of the Senate; two representatives of county government parks and recreation, one from an urban county and one from a rural county, appointed by a statewide organization representing county governments; two representatives of city parks and recreation, one of whom must be from a city with a population over 30,000 and one from a city with a population of less than 30,000, appointed by a statewide organization representing cities; three representatives of local parks users, one who represents the interests of team sport users, one who represents the interests of individual users, and one who represents youth users, appointed by a statewide organization that represents local park and recreation interests; a representative of the Office of Financial Management (OFM) appointed by the director of OFM; a representative of the sporting goods and outdoor recreation products industry, appointed by a statewide organization that represents producers and retailers of such merchandise; a representative of commercial business interests that are affected by the existence of local parks, appointed by a statewide organization representing the interests of commercial business in the state; a representative from either a metropolitan park district, a park and recreation service area, or a park and recreation service district; and a representative of an environmental interest organization with familiarity and expertise in parks land use issues, appointed by a statewide organization representing environmental interests.

The task force elects its own chair. Staff support for the task force is provided by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation. The task force is directed to convene as soon as possible after the appointment of its members. The task force must meet in at least four different parts of the state.

The task force is required to report and recommend to the Legislature an analysis that: details current local park and recreation uses and trends; details current funding for local park and recreation maintenance and operations; describes the benefits that local parks provide to the state; examines the anticipated future needs of local parks and recreation agencies; and includes recommendations on sources of funding to meet the operational needs of local parks and recreation agencies.

The task force may make recommendations on other issues related to the successful implementation of this legislation. The task force expires on June 30, 2002.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

An additional member is added to the task force. This additional person may represent either a metropolitan park district, a park and recreation service area, or a park and recreation service district.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 8, 2001.

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

Testimony For: Parks are currently funded by the general fund of the city or county. The general fund revenues for local governments are decreasing at the same time that demands for jails and other public health and safety demands are growing. Parks are often the first area of service cut by local governments. The public's demand for parks is growing at the same time that entire park departments have been eliminated in some jurisdictions. Some parks are hitting the levy lid and are unable to levy all the money approved by the voters for parks. Parks make it easier to sell homes. This task force will help document the problem and help identify solutions. Solutions could include making money provided by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation more flexible.

Testimony Against: None

Testified: (In support) T.K. Bentler, Metro Parks of Tacoma; Leslie Betlach, Washington Recreational Park Resource Association, city of Renton; Al Davis, Washington Recreational Park Resource Association, King County; Bryan Wahl, Washington Association of Realtors; and Craig Engelking, Washington Trails.