## SENATE BILL REPORT SB 5267

As of January 24, 2001

Title: An act relating to water rights.

**Brief Description:** Allowing an application for a change of an existing water right in a more timely manner.

**Sponsors:** Senators Morton, West, Sheahan, Brown, Honeyford, McCaslin, Hewitt, Hochstatter, T. Sheldon and Hale.

**Brief History:** 

Committee Activity: Environment, Energy & Water: 1/25/01.

## SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & WATER

**Staff:** Genevieve Pisarski (786-7488)

**Background:** As a result of growing population and economic development, applications to the state for new water rights and for changes and transfers of existing water rights have continued to increase, as has the complexity of the analysis that is required, in order to render decisions on them. Among other requirements, state law allows approval of an application, only if it will not impair any other existing water rights. By law, applications for new water rights that have not yet been approved must be treated as existing rights and applications must be considered in the order of the date on which they were filed. For purposes of efficiency, however, the law does allow all applications for the same source of supply to be analyzed as a group, even though there may exist older applications whose group, according to source of supply, is still awaiting consideration. Due to limited funding, increasing numbers of applications, and the complexity of analysis, which results both from large numbers of pending applications and large numbers of existing rights, there is an accumulation of over 7,000 pending applications, many of which will not be able to be considered for many years.

**Summary of Bill:** Applications for new water rights that have not yet been approved are not entitled to protection from injury by changes and transfers of existing water rights. Applications for new waters rights and those for changes and transfers of existing water rights within the same source of supply can be considered independently. These provisions apply only in the eastern region of the Department of Ecology and expire on July 31, 2003. Appropriations must be divided equally between the processing of applications for new water rights and for changes and transfers of existing water rights.

**Appropriation:** \$320,000.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

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