

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6181

As Passed Senate, April 30, 2001

Title: An act relating to allowing Washington state ferry fares to be increased in excess of the fiscal growth factor.

Brief Description: Allowing Washington state ferry fares to be increased in excess of the fiscal growth factor.

Sponsors: Senators B. Sheldon, Horn, Spanel, Haugen and Gardner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

First Special Session: Passed Senate: 4/30/01, 44-4.

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7484)

Background: In the 2000 supplemental budget, Chapter 3, Laws of 2000, 2nd Special Session, the Legislature created the Joint Task Force on Ferries (JTFF). Part of the JTFF's charge was to review fare policy and determine what level of operational funding should be collected through the farebox. JTFF, as well as the Transportation Commission's Tariff Policy Committee, has recommended that the commission begin phasing in increases over a six-year period. The goal of the increases would be to increase the proportion of operating expenses recovered from the farebox from the current level of 60 percent to a new target level of 80 percent.

Ferry tariffs (fares) are a fee under RCW 43.135.055 and are subject to the I-601 limit. However, I-601 authorized the Legislature to exempt particular fees, thus allowing them to be raised in excess of the I-601 limit. The ferry fares cannot be raised unless the Legislature exempts the fares from the I-601 limit on fee increases.

Summary of Bill: The Transportation Commission is granted the authority to increase ferry fares in excess of the I-601 limitation on fee increases.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.