

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5414

As Passed Senate, March 12, 2005

Title: An act relating to aviation fees and taxes.

Brief Description: Adjusting aviation fees and taxes.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen and Swecker).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/15/05, 3/2/05 [DPS, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 3/12/05, 47-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5414 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Eide, Kastama, Mulliken, Oke, Spanel and Weinstein.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Benson and Esser.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Under current law and with few exceptions, Washington pilots, and airmen or airwomen (e.g., certain mechanics, aircraft dispatchers, and air-traffic control tower operators), must register with the Washington State Department of Transportation. The registration fee is fifteen dollars. Effective during the current fiscal biennium (July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2005), seven dollars of each fee must be deposited into the aeronautics account to be used solely for airport maintenance. The remaining eight dollars must be deposited into the aircraft search and rescue, safety, and education account, to be used for: (1) search and rescue efforts; (2) safety and education; and (3) volunteer recognition and support. Effective July 1, 2005, this distribution expires and the entire fifteen dollar registration fee must be deposited into the aircraft search and rescue, safety, and education account.

Summary of Bill: Certain provisions regarding aviation fees and taxes are revised as follows: (1) the state pilot and airman/airwoman registration requirement is repealed; (2) the aircraft search and rescue, safety, and education account is repealed; (3) the aviation fuel tax is increased one cent to eleven cents per gallon; and (4) air carriers, subject to the commercial aircraft exemption from the aviation fuel tax, are defined.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for original and substitute bill.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2005.

Testimony For: Search and rescue volunteers serve an important aviation safety role. However, airport facilities around the state have critical maintenance needs, including pavement repair and infrastructure projects. The distribution of a portion of the pilot registration fees toward airport maintenance allows the state to leverage needed federal dollars to pursue important airport maintenance projects. However, an amendment to the bill to add a second biennial expiration to the split distribution of the pilot registration fees between search and rescue, and airport maintenance, would be supported by various stakeholders. Search and rescue programs just need three more years of full funding and would then be able to operate without a dedicated funding source. The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) has a historic role in search and rescue activities, but is unable to provide these services on their own. The CAP supports the existing airport maintenance distribution, but also supports an additional biennial limitation to the distribution.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Bruce Angell, private pilot/aircraft owner; Barbara Tolbert, Northwest Experimental Aircraft Association. OTHER: John Sibold, WSDOT Aviation Director; Gary Evans & Tom Jensen, WA Air Search & Rescue; Dale Newell, Civil Air Patrol.