

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2ESB 5723

As Reported by House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to creating the community agricultural worker safety grant program.

Brief Description: Creating and funding the community agricultural worker safety grant program.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Clements, Hatfield, Roach, Shin, Morton, Kline, Schoesler, Haugen, Sheldon, Hargrove, Kohl-Welles, Fairley, Honeyford, Franklin, Keiser, Berkey, Kauffman, Kilmer, Jacobsen, Kastama, Benton, Zarelli and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/26/08, 2/28/08 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Second Engrossed Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Creates the Community Agricultural Worker Safety Grant Program within the Department of Agriculture.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Green, Moeller and Williams.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse.

Staff: Joan Elgee (786-7106).

Background:

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) carries out more than 25 programs that support the agricultural community and promote consumer and environmental protection. These programs include Animal Health Services, Commodity Inspection, Food Safety and Consumer Services, Pesticide Management, and Plant Protection.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Incorporated (OIC) is a national non-profit organization that operates through local affiliated organizations. The OIC Washington affiliate has locations in Mount Vernon, Moses Lake, Pasco, Sunnyside, Ellensburg, Roslyn, Seattle, Wenatchee, and Yakima. The OIC provides education and employment support, including farmworker programs.

The 2007-09 Operating Budget includes \$500,000 to the WSDA for pass-through funding to the OIC to provide training to agricultural workers related to farm skills, English as a second language (ESL), and other skills.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Legislative findings are made that agricultural workers face difficulties in upgrading their skills and that the agricultural industry's demand for skilled workers far outnumbers the supply. The Legislature further finds that additional training of agricultural workers should assist in ongoing efforts to reduce agricultural occupational injuries.

The Community Agricultural Worker Safety Grant Program is created within the WSDA. Subject to appropriation, the WSDA must conduct a competitive grant process and award a grant of up to \$250,000 per year to a nonprofit organization to develop and provide practical, hands-on training for the state's agricultural workers.

The grant recipient must work with specific stakeholders. With respect to tractor and farm machinery skills and safety, and pesticides, the grant recipient must work with farmers, farm workers, and related organizations. With respect to adult basic skills, civics, ESL, commercial drivers' licensing, and other related topics, the grant recipient must work with community and technical colleges. Stakeholders may not receive compensation for their participation.

The WSDA must monitor the effectiveness of any training developed and provided.

The WSDA must report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1 of each year beginning in 2008 on the implementation of agricultural worker safety training pursuant to: (1) the budget proviso in the 2007-08 Operating Budget providing the WSDA pass-through funding to the OIC; and (2) the grant program, as appropriate. The report shall include, as appropriate, information about the competitive grant process used and the grant recipient selected, any training developed and provided, the number of people trained, and any reduction in workplace injuries.

The grant program provisions take effect July 1, 2009, and all the provisions expire July 1, 2012.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amended bill provides for the WSDA to conduct a competitive grant process to award a grant of up to \$250,000 per year to a nonprofit organization to develop and provide practical,

hands-on training for the state's agricultural workers. The competitive grant program takes effect July 1, 2009. (The 2ESB 5723 provided for the agricultural safety program to be implemented by the OIC, rather than through a competitive process.)

The amended bill also adds the reporting requirement, under which the WSDA must report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1 of each year beginning in 2008, on the implementation of agricultural worker safety training pursuant to: (1) the budget proviso in the 2007-08 Operating Budget providing the WSDA pass-through funding to the OIC; and (2) the competitive grant program, as appropriate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except section 2, creating the Community Agricultural Worker Safety Grant Program, which takes effect July 1, 2009.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will make a wonderful program ongoing until 2012. Through this program, workers receive comprehensive training in how to safely drive and work with equipment, climb a ladder, and otherwise be safe. Workers also can learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation and obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL). The OIC trained over 600 persons in pesticide management. The OIC also assists with housing, teaches civics, and reaches out to the whole family. This bill helps make workers safer and more efficient, which lowers costs.

The OIC is accountable and has a long history of being productive. This partnership really works and helps the whole community. The WSDA has been monitoring the program.

(Information only) The WSDA entered a contract with the OIC in September 2007. The following annual goals were established: 600 persons trained in pesticides; 150 persons to receive ESL and civics education; 120 persons trained in machine safety; and 17 persons to receive CDL training. In February the OIC was at 80 percent of goal. The WSDA will be going to Yakima to observe the program.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor; Representative Skinner; Chris Cheney, Washington Growers League and Hop Growers of Washington.

(Information only) Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (In support) Dan Fazio, Washington Farm Bureau.