

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6145

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As Amended by House, March 5, 2014

**Title:** An act relating to declaring the *Ostrea lurida* the official oyster of the state of Washington.

**Brief Description:** Declaring the *Ostrea lurida* the official oyster of the state of Washington.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Governmental Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Hatfield, Roach, Chase, Sheldon, Fraser and McAuliffe).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Governmental Operations: 1/23/14, 1/27/14 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/13/14, 47-1.

Passed House: 3/05/14, 94-4.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6145 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Conway, Dansel, McCoy and Rivers.

**Staff:** Samuel Brown (786-7470)

**Background:** The state of Washington confers the official designation on various flora, fauna, performing arts, minerals, and tartan. The official fauna are designated as the orca, the official marine mammal; the Olympic marmot, the official endemic mammal; the willow goldfinch, the official bird; the steelhead trout, the official fish; and the common green darner dragonfly, the official insect.

The *Ostrea lurida*, commonly known as the Olympia oyster, is the only oyster native to Washington. Its natural habitat includes rocks in areas near the expanse of the low tide, and mudflats and gravel bars in estuaries and bays. Olympia oysters are flat oysters whose shells average 5-8 cm, or 2-3 inches, long. Olympia oysters play an important ecological role by regulating plankton blooms, decreasing the potential for Red Tide and other harmful algal blooms, and balancing nutrient input in the water.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The *Ostrea lurida*, or Olympia oyster, is declared the official oyster of the state of Washington.

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*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.*

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill:** PRO: The *ostrea lurida* stands as a living symbol of Washington's history, from the earliest settlers to the present day, and deserves protection as our native oyster. It was eaten for thousands of years by coastal and inland tribes and has a nationwide reputation as a delicacy. Pioneers created an oyster-gathering industry that supplied the California Gold Rush. The oyster is inextricably linked to our state capital: Olympia residents travelled the state with barrels of the oysters, helping gain favor for Olympia as state capital. As a result of overfishing, what was once a gathering business has now become a farming industry. Pollution around oyster beds led Washington farmers to fight for the earliest clean water regulations. The Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers support this bill.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Claire Thompson, citizen; Jim Jesernig, Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers.

**House Amendment(s):** "Common tribal names" is removed as a reference. The Shoalwater oyster is added to the list of historic and common names by which the oyster is known.