
Environment Committee

HB 2057

Brief Description: Directing the department of ecology to conduct a study of light pollution that provides recommendations to the legislature on policy options to reduce light pollution.

Sponsors: Representatives Farrell, Fitzgibbon, Kagi, Walkinshaw and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Ecology to complete a study of environmental, economic, and public health effects of light pollution, and to submit the study and recommendations to the Legislature by January 1, 2017.

Hearing Date: 1/12/16

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

The Department of Ecology (ECY) administers various environmental programs, including laws that regulate air, land, and water pollution. The ECY has also adopted noise pollution standards, although noise pollution regulations are administered and enforced by local governments. State laws regulate the use of lighting in several specific contexts. Transportation laws require the use of front, tail, and other lights by motor vehicles, while restricting vehicle use of certain types of lights, such as flashing lights, in other instances. Transportation laws also establish limits on the use of outdoor advertising signage adjacent to state highways, including use of certain types of illuminated signs.

Projects and government decisions undergoing environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act must evaluate associated potential impacts to light and glare. Some cities and counties have adopted ordinances that regulate aspects of outdoor lighting. Ordinances adopted by local governments in Washington to limit outdoor lighting include measures that:

- limit the illuminating power of outdoor lights;

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- specifically restrict certain uses of lighting, such as illuminated athletic fields or industrial sources of light; or
- require that outdoor lights be positioned or shaded so as to limit illumination of neighboring properties or other features.

Summary of Bill:

The ECY is directed to complete a study of the effects of light pollution on the environment, property value, and public health and well-being. The study must evaluate public health and environmental risks of light pollution, locations impacted by light pollution, and policy options used by other jurisdictions to address light pollution.

The ECY must submit the study, including recommendations for policy changes to address light pollution, to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature by January 1, 2017.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/5/16.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.