

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5008

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 11, 1991

Brief Description: Establishing the Pacific Northwest Economic Region.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Senators Bluechel, Gaspard, Hayner, Snyder, Matson, Vognild, Cantu, McMullen, von Reichbauer, Nelson, McDonald, Barr, Sellar, Bailey, Moore, Conner and Bauer).

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5008 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Matson, Chairman; Bluechel, McCaslin, McDonald, McMullen, and Skratek.

Staff: Traci Anderson (786-7452)

Hearing Dates: January 23, 1991; February 4, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In the emerging global economy, countries located in specific regions of the world are forging new economic alliances as a way of increasing their overall competitiveness in the changing world economy. Such alliances allow countries to work together toward workable solutions for common social and economic problems. The northwest states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia are in a position to act together as a region to increase the overall competitiveness of these individual states and provinces and to develop viable solutions for common public policy matters. It has been stated that such cooperation could provide substantial economic and social benefits for the citizens of the participating states and provinces.

In 1989 and 1990 the Washington State Legislature and the Northwest Policy Center at the University of Washington sponsored the first and second annual meetings of legislators from the seven northwest states and provinces. Over 60 legislative leaders from each of the seven entities attended. The initial meeting focused on the feasibility of establishing greater collaborative efforts among the seven northwest states and provinces. At the 1990 meeting legislators developed a work plan for 1991 that will seek to establish specific cooperative activities in six key policy areas including: expanding environmental enterprise; creating markets for recycled materials; expanding markets for value-added wood products; improving telecommunications in higher education;

investing in the future work force; and promoting tourism development.

SUMMARY:

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region is established. The state of Washington agrees to participate in the new regional organization.

The states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia are eligible to participate in the new organization.

The agreement to act as a regional entity is effective when one state, one province, and one additional state and/or province agree to participate in the new organization.

The goals of the organization are to develop and establish policies that: enhance the overall competitiveness of the region in international and domestic markets; increase the economic well-being of all citizens in the region; and improve the quality of life of the citizens of the Pacific Northwest.

The substantive actions of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region may take the form of uniform legislation, research on policy issues of interest to the region, and/or other policy initiatives endorsed by participating entities.

Policy areas that are of particular interest to the organization include: international trade; economic development; human resources; the environment and natural resources; and energy and education.

The organizational structure of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region consists of a delegate council and an executive committee. Legislators are appointed by participating states and provinces to serve on these committees.

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region is an initiative involving the legislative bodies of the participating states and provinces. However, the participating states are directed to work with the executive branch and other appropriate organizations in the advancement of proposals developed by the organization.

Appropriation: \$49,900

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Together the seven states and provinces have the tenth largest GNP in the world, making the region an attractive trading partner for other countries. Bringing states and provinces together to form an economic alliance will increase the trade opportunities for the state and the region as a whole.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Senator Alan Bluechel, prime sponsor; David Harrison, Director, Northwest Policy Center, University of Washington; Tim Strege, Director, Council of Vocational Technical Institutes; Tim Zimmerman, Troutlodge; Vito Chiechi, Washington State Coalition of Travel