

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1706

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks

Title: An act relating to metals mining.

Brief Description: Regulating metals mining.

Sponsors: Representatives Dunshee, Wolfe, Rust, Valle,
Pruitt, Linville and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, March 3, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Pruitt, Chair; R. Johnson, Vice Chair; Dunshee; Linville; Schoesler; Valle; and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Stevens, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Sheldon; and Thomas.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: A gold mining operation using a process called chemical leach mining has been proposed for a site in Eastern Washington.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A task force on chemical leach mining is established to develop legislation to better regulate the development, operation, and reclamation of open-pit chemical leach mines in Washington. A list of seven tasks are identified for the task force. Membership on the 14-member task force is to be established as follows: two members of the House, two members of the Senate, the commissioner of public lands or the commissioner's designee, the director of the Department of Ecology or the director's designee, two representatives of the mining industry, two representatives of environmental organizations, and four representatives of the general public. The task force is to submit recommended legislation to the governor and the Legislature by January 1, 1994.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill provided for comprehensive regulation of metals mining operations. The substitute bill establishes a task force to develop legislation for regulating open-pit chemical leach mining.

Fiscal Note: Requested March 3, 1993.

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

Testimony For (Original Bill): Regulatory control of mining operations in Washington is inadequate. The responsibilities of state and local agencies are not clearly defined. These chemical leach mining operations can cause tremendous long-term environmental damage and their operations should be overseen very carefully. Taking steps now may help prevent the state and local communities from having to pay to clean up the damage later.

Testimony Against (Original Bill): This bill goes too far in regulating mining. There are already too many regulatory programs and restrictions in place for mining operations. New mining operations create good paying jobs and help support local economies. This bill would affect existing mining operations as well as new ones.

Witnesses: Jennifer Belcher, Commissioner of Public Lands (con); Ron Weeks, Okanogan County Commissioner (con); K.O. Rosenberg, Northeast Tri-Counties (con); Reese Hastings, Northwest Mining Association (con); Gurney Thompson, DuPont-Conoco (con); Brant Hinze, Battle Mountain Gold (con); Ron Clayton, Hecla Mining (con); Hank Lesinsky, Echo Bay (con); Richard Smith, Washington Coalition for Responsible Mining (pro); Kevin Herrick, North Cascades Conservation Council (pro); Anne Robison, League of Women Voters (pro); Ozzie Wilkinson, Northwest Alloys (con); Geraldine Payton, Columbiana (pro); Jim Krull, Department of Ecology; Chris Stearns (pro); Bill Downs, Hart Crowser, Inc. (con); Michael Mazzetti, Okanogan Highland Alliance (pro); Chris Carrel, Washington Wilderness Coalition (pro); Chris Parsens, Washington Coalition for Responsible Mining (pro); Darlene Madenwald, Washington Environmental Council (pro); and Richard Parks, N.P.A.C. (pro).