

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8017

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Environmental Quality & Water Resources, January 28, 2000

Brief Description: Requesting federal assistance in ensuring pipeline safety.

Sponsors: Senators Spanel, Gardner, Oke, Brown, Swecker, Franklin, Kline, B. Sheldon, Shin, Bauer, Eide, Patterson, Haugen, Costa, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Fairley, McAuliffe, Prentice, Fraser, Goings, Hale and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Environmental Quality & Water Resources: 1/25/2000, 1/28/2000 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY & WATER RESOURCES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Joint Memorial No. 8017 be substituted therefor, and the substitute joint memorial do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Morton and Swecker.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: The federal Pipeline Safety Act preempts states from adopting safety or environmental standards. The act does allow states to seek and accept designation as federal agents for the purpose of enforcing existing federal requirements on interstate hazardous liquid pipelines. To date, only four states have obtained this additional designation for hazardous liquid pipelines: Arizona, California, Minnesota, and New York. The federal Office of Pipeline Safety has not allowed additional states to obtain this designation since the mid 1990s.

Many pipeline safety advocates believe the federal Pipeline Safety Act is deficient in two areas: (1) it does not allow states to develop more stringent requirements, and (2) the existing requirements are viewed by some as inadequate.

The state of Washington is presently certified to assume safety responsibilities related to intrastate pipelines, but not interstate pipelines.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Congress is requested to: (1) amend the federal Pipeline Safety Act to allow states to adopt and enforce standards that are stricter than the current federal standards; (2) allow the states to seek authority to administer and enforce the federal pipeline laws; and (3) increase funding for both state and federal efforts to ensure pipeline safety and for states to respond to pipeline accident emergencies.

The President is requested to direct the federal Office of Pipeline Safety to grant qualified states the authority to enforce federal standards.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute adds an additional item to the congressional request. It requests that Congress also provide funding for states to respond to pipeline accident emergencies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: This is an important measure to send to Congress, as the federal Pipeline Safety Act is up for renewal this year. States need the authority to conduct inspections of interstate pipelines. The federal government has only 54 inspectors to oversee the 2 million miles of pipelines in this country. That works out to one inspector to cover enough pipeline to circle the earth. The bill should be expanded to include the specific items addressed by SB 6441 - valves, inspections, and leak detection.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Spanel, prime sponsor; Carol Jolly, Governor's Office; Donald Norman; Eric Espenhorst, Friends of the Earth; Dan Sexton, Washington State Assoc. Of Plumbers and Pipefitters; Josh Baldi, Washington Environmental Council; Susan Harper, Cascade Columbia Alliance.