

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5002

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Economic Development & Telecommunications, February 6, 2001

**Title:** An act relating to height restrictions on amateur radio antennas.

**Brief Description:** Regarding height restrictions on amateur radio antennas.

**Sponsors:** Senators Roach and Swecker.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Economic Development & Telecommunications: 1/29/01,  
2/6/01[w/oRec-SLG].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Majority Report:** That it be referred to Committee on State & Local Government without recommendation.

Signed by Senators T. Sheldon, Chair; B. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Fairley, Finkbeiner, Haugen, McCaslin, Rossi and Stevens.

**Staff:** William Bridges (786-7424)

**Background:** Washington law incorporates the federal rules concerning amateur radio antennas, which require local governments to reasonably accommodate such antennas. Despite the law, some amateur radio operators still claim they are frustrated by restrictive local ordinances.

One reason for the frustration may be because the federal rules do not specify a height limit for amateur radio antennas. Therefore, the federal rules essentially permit a local government to regulate any height of an antenna so long as the regulation is considered reasonable. To address this issue, Oregon and Virginia have generally prohibited local governments from regulating antennas that are below 70 to 75 feet. This height was chosen because it allows amateur radio operators to use the most popular frequency bands.

**Summary of Bill:** No local government may oppose an amateur radio antenna that is 70 feet high or less without a clearly defined health, safety, or aesthetic consideration.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** The federal government regulates the licenses and operation of home amateur radios. Why should local governments, with their lack of uniform rules, interfere with the operation of these radios? Amateur radio is fun but it takes a great deal of effort to learn. It is an integral part of emergency management services because it does not fail during natural disasters like the imbedded infrastructure. But many communities have ordinances and covenants which make it difficult for amateur radio operators to put up antennas. The higher an amateur radio antenna is, the less electromagnetic radiation it emits at ground level. Amateur radio antennas are built to be strong, and are less likely to blow over than tall trees. Amateur radio antennas are no less unsightly than utility poles and transmission towers. There are only two manufacturers of telescopic antennas around 70 feet high: one makes a 70-foot antenna and the other makes a 72-foot antenna. The bill should be redrafted so it does not favor one manufacturer over another.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Pam Roach, prime sponsor; Sophia Byrd, Wash. State Assn of Counties (concerns); Lee Chambers, Amateur Radio Relay League (pro); Daniel Crane, Olympia Amateur Radio Society (pro); George Hutchison, Auburn (pro); Victoria Lincoln, Assn of Wash. Cities (concerns); James Monaghan, Puyallup (pro); Al Williams, Olympia (pro).