

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 5674

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As Passed Senate, March 13, 2001

**Title:** An act relating to potential climate change.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the Washington climate center.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Environment, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Constantine, Jacobsen, Prentice, Fraser and Kohl-Welles).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Environment, Energy & Water: 2/6/01, 2/23/01 [DPS, DNP].  
Passed Senate: 3/13/01, 29-20.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & WATER

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5674 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Eide, Jacobsen and Patterson.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hale, Honeyford, McDonald and Morton.

**Staff:** Jim Metropulos (786-7784)

**Background:** Concerns have been raised regarding the increase of gases such as carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and what effects these increases will have on the earth's climate. Long-term observations confirm that our climate is changing at a rapid rate. Washington's water supply, agriculture, natural resources, coastal infrastructure, and public health may be affected as a result of climate change. However, no centralized effort exists in Washington to plan for the potential impacts of climate change.

Plants absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and convert it and water into oxygen and sugar through photosynthesis. It is thought that global output of carbon dioxide is greater than the current capacity of plant conversion of carbon dioxide. The absorption and synthesis of carbon dioxide is referred to as a carbon sequestration or storage.

Currently, other states and countries have carbon emission trading programs. Under these programs, producers of carbon dioxide are limited in the amounts they can produce. If a producer wishes to exceed their limit, they must pay a forest landowner or other planted landowner to keep plant life forms productively converting carbon dioxide. The amounts of carbon dioxide converted are estimated and traded as commodity credits on an open market.

**Summary of Bill:** The establishment of an independent, nonprofit organization called the Washington Climate Center is authorized. The center will serve as a clearinghouse for all climate change activities in the state and is funded through grants and voluntary cash and in-

kind contributions. The center is made up of a board of directors appointed by the Governor. The board of directors may hire staff and take on volunteers. The Washington State University Energy Program and the University of Washington, Climate Impacts Group, may provide technical assistance and research to the center.

The duties of the center include: determining current and projected emissions of greenhouse gases in the state; collecting and sharing scientific and technological data related to climate change; assisting and collecting all climate contingency planning in the state; advising relevant sectors of prospective commercial opportunities; studying and recommending avenues for capping the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the state by December 31, 2003; studying and recommending the most cost-effective methods for eliminating all net greenhouse gas emissions in the state by December 31, 2020; studying and recommending the most cost-effective methods for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector consistent with federal law; certifying the extent and degree of any mitigation projects; developing adequate methods for the monitoring and verification of mitigation projects; and serving as a central, independent registry available for the trading of emissions credits, if any.

The center must: develop and publish its rules of operation, calculations, and methods; accomplish any other duty assigned to it by the Legislature for which adequate funding is provided; and provide an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature by December 31 regarding its operations, including the status of greenhouse gas emissions in the state.

If funds are available, the center must also: identify key sectors within the state likely to be affected adversely by climate change; notify and convene meetings of key members of those sectors; examine and report on the feasibility of a carbon storage program for the state; provide relevant scientific and technological information to the public and key sectors; support a collaborative response to assist those sectors; and assist in the creation of effective contingency planning for those sectors. In establishing contingency plans, the center works with the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Health, the Department of Transportation, and the Washington State University energy program. The board may also establish task forces and advisory committees to assist in carrying out the center's duties under this section.

Emitters of greenhouse gases are encouraged to mitigate their emissions. The center may assist any emitter in selecting, certifying, and monitoring a mitigation project. The center must also publicize any successful mitigation projects and efforts.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2001.

**Testimony For:** Energy crisis illustrates the need to combat greenhouse gas emissions. The center will help people and business avoid draconian government solutions. Carbon levels are increasing, we need strong steps. There is a need to study public health effects.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Conway Leovy, Professor Emeritus of Atmospheric Sciences, University of Washington; Dr. Sandy Rock, Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center; Terry Nyman, former Director, Pacific Northwest Air Pollution Authority; Mike Ruby, President, Environmetrics; Mary Lux.