
**Trade & Economic Development
Committee**

HB 1173

Brief Description: Revising provisions for the office of the Washington state trade representative.

Sponsors: Representatives Veloria, Conway and Chase.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands and clarifies the duties of the Washington State Trade Representative to include the review and analysis of trade agreements, informing the Legislature of international trade developments, acting as the state's liaison to the U.S. Trade Representative, and other trade and foreign investment promotion duties.

Hearing Date: 1/31/03

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

Background:

Washington's economy relies significantly on international trade. A great deal of international trade is governed by trade agreements and international organization. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the World Trade Organizations (WTO) are examples of international agreements and organizations that can impact Washington businesses.

The Office of the Washington State Trade Representative (WSTR) was created by the Legislature in 1995. The WSTR is the state's official liaison to foreign governments on trade matters.

Currently, the WSTR is authorized to accept or request grants or gifts from citizens and other private sources. These funds may be used to help defray the costs of hosting foreign dignitaries and other activities of the WSTR. The WSTR must open and maintain a bank account for the deposit of all receipts of grants and gifts. All money and interest earned in the WSTR bank account are not considered public funds and are not subject to appropriation or the state's budgeting, accounting, or reporting requirements.

Summary of Bill:

The duties of the WSTR are expanded to include the review and analysis of proposed international trade agreements and their impact on Washington businesses. The WSTR is directed to provide input to the office of the United State Trade Representative about policy developments that effect Washington.

In addition, the WSTR must work with the International Trade Division at the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development and the International Marketing Program at the state Department of Agriculture to develop a statewide strategy to increase the export of Washington goods and services.

The WSTR will serve as a liaison to the Legislature on matters of trade policy and keep the Legislature informed about the ongoing trade negotiations, trade developments and any possible impacts on the Washington economy.

The WSTR office shall prepare and submit an annual report on its activities and deliver it to the governor and the appropriate standing committees of the state legislature.

Finally, the WSTR shall conduct other activities to promote international trade and foreign investment within the state as directed by the governor.

The language authorizing the WSTR to accept private monies and maintain a separate account is moved to a stand-alone section.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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