
State Government Committee

2SSB 6217

Brief Description: Creating the Washington regulatory improvement project.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Swecker, Prentice, Doumit, Berkey, Morton, Rasmussen, Hale, Jacobsen, Hargrove, Regala, Finkbeiner, T. Sheldon, Horn, Esser, Oke and Haugen).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creates a public-private research project to make recommendations on the revision and streamlining of environmental permits.

Hearing Date: 2/19/04

Staff: Matt Kuehn (786-7291).

Background:

Federal, state, and local governments all have permit systems established for the protection of environmental resources.

Environmental matters with activities regulated by permit under state authority include statutory provisions involving the Department of Ecology, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Health, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Beyond state agencies, state statutory law regulates permits in acts involving public highways and transportation, recycling of solid waste, mines and minerals, and water pollution, as well as the Washington Clean Air Act and the Shoreline Management Act.

Beyond these are numerous federal and local permit regulations.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Regulatory Improvement Project (the project) is a collaborative, public-private effort, created to research, coordinate, and develop recommendations for improvements to the permit system. It does not alter the preexisting permit laws or regulations.

The project is intended to improve economic competitiveness and environmental outcomes by the revision and streamlining of the current permitting processes.

The project is allowed to identify opportunities to enhance public involvement and participation as well as the improvement of environmental outcomes. The project may also develop recommendations for:

- programmatic or routine permits;
- facilitating watershed-based environmental mitigation;
- future streamlining of the permitting process; and
- funding the project.

The membership of the project consists of:

- two members of the Senate, one from each political party, appointed by the President of the Senate;

- two members of the House of Representatives, one from each political party, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

- the director or director's designee of the Office of Regulatory Assistance;
- the director or director's designee of the Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- the director or director's designee of the Department of Transportation;
- the Commissioner of Public Lands or the commissioner's designee;
- a representative of the Association of Washington Cities, appointed by the Governor;
- a representative of the Washington Association of Counties, appointed by the Governor;
- a representative of the Washington Public Ports Association, appointed by the Governor;
- a representative of environmental interests, appointed by the Governor;
- a representative of the business community, appointed by the Governor; and
- representatives of federal permitting agencies, tribes, and state universities are to be invited.

The act is null and void if it is not specifically funded by the 2004 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.