

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5401

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, March 1, 2005

Title: An act relating to registration fees for weighing and measuring devices.

Brief Description: Concerning registration fees for weighing and measuring devices.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Benson, Thibaudeau, Kline, Poulsen and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 2/10/05, 3/1/05 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Brown, Keiser and Prentice.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Parlette, Ranking Minority Member; Hewitt and Honeyford.

Staff: John Dziedzic (786-7784)

Background: The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), through its Metrology Laboratory, maintains the state measurement benchmarks for mass, volume, and length. The WSDA Weights and Measures Program registers, tests, inspects, and investigates complaints regarding commercial weighing and price verification devices throughout the state, except in cities that have established a weights and measures program through the Office of the City Sealer. Two cities in Washington have a City Sealer: Seattle and Spokane.

Weighing or measuring devices such as grocery scales, railroad track scales, liquid fuel meters, fabric meters, and taxi meters must be registered annually. Registration fees for the different types of devices are established in statute. The same fee must be charged regardless whether the device is registered with the WSDA or a City Sealer.

City Sealers and the WSDA may separately establish reasonable fees for inspecting and testing the various types of weighing and measuring devices, which must be limited to the direct costs associated with such inspections and testing.

Summary of Bill: A city with its own City Sealer may establish fees greater than the fees set in statute, but the fees may not exceed the cost of administering the city's weights and measures program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: City Sealers assures both consumers and business that measuring devices are accurate and fair; neither overcharging nor undercharging. The fees for such services were established in 1995 and do not cover the costs of the programs.

Testimony Against: Most cities rely on the state program, supported by the general fund, to assure accurate weighing and measuring devices. The state does a better job of prioritizing inspections. Having two separate system amounts to double taxation.

Who Testified: PRO: David Foster, Craig Leisy, City of Seattle; Tom Parker, City of Spokane.

CON: Jan Gee, WA Food Industry, WA Retail Assn.