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**HOUSE BILL 2765**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Lekanoff, Ortiz-Self, Boehnke, Chapman, and Slatter

AN ACT Relating to creating a joint select committee on water; adding a new section to chapter 90.03 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that management of water resources throughout the state would be improved by aligning the state's laws, policies, and resources with current and forecast needs. Decades of statutory changes that respond to specific water resource issues and court decisions have resulted in a complex and confusing legal environment for water users and for water managers in the department of ecology. A lack of clarity in the state's water policy contributes to reduced certainty and efficiency in the use of public and private resources in water rights administration.

(2) The legislature intends to address this situation by creating a joint select committee to develop a statewide water action plan. It is the intent of the legislature to provide state agencies and water users with a cohesive strategy to ensure that the state's water policies provide a clear and effective foundation on which to make sound decisions about allocations of water resources.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 90.03 RCW to read as follows:

(1) A joint select committee on water resource policy is established for the purpose of developing a statewide water action plan that identifies areas of statute, administrative rule, policy, and practice that should be updated, and makes appropriate corresponding strategic policy recommendations, in order to ensure that water resources are appropriately allocated to address current and future statewide needs.

(2) The joint select committee consists of two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate, appointed by the president of the senate, and two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives.

(3) There are two cochairs of the joint select committee. One cochair of the joint select committee must be a member of the majority caucus of one chamber of the legislature and one cochair must be a member of the minority caucus of the other chamber of the legislature, as those caucuses existed as of January 13, 2020.

(4) The joint select committee shall, by a majority of the members, adopt rules to govern its conduct as may be necessary or appropriate, including reasonable procedures for calling and conducting meetings of the joint select committee, ensuring reasonable advance notice of each meeting, and providing for the right of the public to attend each meeting.

(5) The joint select committee shall convene from time to time at the call of one or both of the cochairs or upon the request of three or more members of the joint select committee. The joint select committee must meet at least three times each calendar year and the joint select committee is encouraged to hold at least one of its meetings each year at a location outside of Olympia. In even-numbered years, at least one meeting, which must take place no later than September 30th, must include a review of recent progress in the area of water policy and a consideration of water-related policy or budgetary matters to come before the legislature during the upcoming legislative session. Any meeting of the joint select committee must include an opportunity for public comment.

(6) The joint select committee has the following responsibilities:

(a) To conduct a comprehensive review of water policy, including statutes, case law, administrative rules, policies, and the laws and policies of other states, where appropriate;

(b) To engage stakeholders in the joint select committee's deliberations through outreach conducted by the department and reports from the department to the joint select committee;

(c) To produce and periodically update a statewide water action plan that identifies areas of statute, administrative rule, policy, and practice that should be updated in order to ensure that water resources are appropriately allocated to meet current and future statewide needs; and

(d) As part of the statewide water action plan, to make recommendations to the legislature on budgetary and policy actions related to water resource policy.

(7) Policy and budgetary recommendations of the joint select committee must be made by a sixty percent majority of the appointed members of the joint select committee. Minority recommendations that achieve the support of at least three of the appointed members of the joint select committee may also be submitted to the legislature. If a member has not been designated for a position set forth in subsection (2) of this section, that position may not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

(8) Within existing appropriations, the expenses of the operations of the joint select committee, including the expenses associated with the joint select committee's meetings, must be paid jointly and in equal amounts by the senate and the house of representatives. Joint select committee expenditures are subject to approval by the house executive rules committee and the senate facility and operations committee. Legislative members of the joint select committee are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120.

(9) Staff support for the joint select committee must be provided by the office of program research and senate committee services.

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