
Environment & Energy Committee

SB 5040

Brief Description: Enhancing litter control along state highways.

Sponsors: Senators Fortunato, Lovelett and Wilson, J..

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to prioritize litter control along state highways in distributing funds for agency litter collection programs.
- Requires Ecology to contract with the Washington State Department of Transportation to schedule litter prevention messaging and coordination of litter emphases patrols with the Washington State Patrol.
- Authorizes local governments to initiate and apply to Ecology for reimbursement of litter clean-up activities on state highway ramps located within the jurisdiction of the local government.

Hearing Date: 3/19/21

Staff: Nikkole Hughes (786-7156).

Background:

The Waste Reduction, Recycling, and Litter Control Act (Act), dating to 1971, establishes statewide programs to prevent and clean up litter, reduce waste, and increase recycling. The Act also prohibits littering on state and private lands not owned by the litterer. The Act gives police powers to enforce littering restrictions to a variety of government agencies and personnel, including the Department of Ecology (Ecology) and State Parks and Recreation Commission employees, local government agencies with law enforcement capabilities, Washington State Patrol officers, the Department of Fish and Wildlife officers, fire wardens, and forest rangers.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A tax is imposed on businesses whose products, including packaging, wrapping, and containers, are reasonably related to littering. The types of products that fall under this tax include beer, cigarettes, soft drinks, newspapers and magazines, glass containers, metal containers, and household paper and paper products.

The revenues from the litter tax are allocated to Ecology from the Waste Reduction, Recycling, and Litter Control Account. Ecology is the coordinating agency between organizations looking to assist in waste reduction, litter control, and recycling, as well as with state agencies, including the Department of Corrections and the Washington State Department of Transportation, and local governments that receive funding for litter control and recycling activities. Ecology employs teenagers through the Ecology Youth Corps to collect litter from highways, parks, and other public areas. Ecology is required to develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the participating agencies' litter collection programs.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) must give priority to litter control along state highways when distributing funds for litter control to partnering agencies. Ecology must contract with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to schedule litter prevention messaging and coordination of litter emphasis patrols with the Washington State Patrol. Additionally, the WSDOT may coordinate with Ecology to conduct litter pickup during schedule maintenance closures as situations allow.

Local governments may initiate and apply to Ecology for reimbursement of litter clean-up activities on state highway ramps located within the jurisdiction of the local government.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.