

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6174

As of January 30, 2024

Title: An act relating to coordinating the scheduling of mowing and litter pickup along state highways.

Brief Description: Coordinating the scheduling of mowing and litter pickup along state highways.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, J., Dozier, Fortunato and Mullet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/30/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Encourages the Washington Department of Transportation and Department of Ecology to schedule mowing along highways to occur after litter pickup.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Megan Tudor (786-7478)

Background: Department of Transportation and Department of Ecology. In 1977 the Department of Transportation (WSDOT) was established as the central governing body for Washington's transportation functions. WSDOT's mission is to provide safe, reliable and cost-effective transportation options to improve communities and economic vitality for people and businesses.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) was established in 1970 as the coordinating and administrative agency responsible for responding to climate change, reducing waste, preventing and reducing toxic threats, and protecting the environment. One of Ecology's most well known programs is the litter prevention program, which began in 1971 as an

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educational program for children.

Washington State Patrol. In 1921 the Washington Legislature authorized the appointment of a highway police with the power of peace officers. The Washington State Patrol's (WSP) primary goal is to provide a safe motoring environment for all Washingtonians and those visiting the state. WSP is responsible for enforcing traffic laws, investigating collisions, and assisting motorists on the state's highways.

Litter Collection. In 2023 WSDOT collected and disposed of 2380 tons of trash from state highways across the state. WSDOT and Ecology spend a combined \$12 million annually on pick up and disposal of litter. Ecology conducts litter studies, hires and maintains adult and youth litter crews, and leads public education campaigns on litter prevention. WSP issues fines to motorists for littering, illegal dumping, and driving with an unsecured vehicle load offenses.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that the scheduling of mowing and litter pickup along state highways should be coordinated to avoid mowing over roadside litter and distributing difficult to find pieces of litter, which pose a hazard to wildlife and Washington's environment.

WSDOT and Ecology are encouraged to coordinate mowing along state highways to occur after litter pickup has taken place. This does not prevent mowing or other similar maintenance activities to be performed if litter pickup has not occurred.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is a coordinating bill, not a messaging bill. You cannot drive our state highways without noticing the voluminous amounts of litter that accumulate there. Litter is bad enough, but once we come along with a mower and chop it up into little pieces, it becomes more of an impact on our environment. Little pieces of trash can float down the storm drain or be consumed by wildlife. 18.5 million pounds of litter was picked up just along our roadways according to the 2022 Department of Ecology report. This bill will help coordinate efforts to keep our highways beautiful and free of hazards to the environment, like litter.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeff Wilson, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.