

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1179

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Energy & Utilities*

Title: An act relating to school buses.

Brief Description: Analyzing the use of compressed natural gas for school bus fuel.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Vance, Holland, Peery, Brough, Cole, Miller, Phillips, Ballard, Rust, Brumsickle, Rayburn, Silver, May, Fuhrman, Hine, Jacobsen, R. King, Sheldon, Paris, Betrozoff, Bowman, Wineberry and G. Fisher.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Energy & Utilities, February 8, 1991, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & UTILITIES**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 9 members: Representatives Grant, Chair; May, Ranking Minority Member; Hochstatter, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Casada; Cooper; R. Fisher; Miller; and Rayburn.

Staff: Fred Adair (786-7113).

Background: As diesel and gasoline prices have increased, several school districts, have begun using compressed natural gas (CNG) as a fuel for their bus fleets. According to proponents of CNG, it is an excellent fuel for school buses because it costs less, burns cleaner with fewer pollutants, and is safer than gasoline.

Others, however, are concerned about the safety of using CNG in school buses, especially in buses that have been retrofitted. Also, some districts are concerned that CNG buses may be underpowered, and that CNG is not available for longer bus trips.

There is also interest in comparing the advantages and disadvantages of additional fuels, such as propane.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Superintendent of Public Instruction, in coordination with the Washington State Energy Office, Department of Ecology, and selected local

school districts, shall prepare a report that analyzes the potential benefits, costs and safety risks associated with increasing the use of compressed natural gas or other alternative fuels as a fuel for school buses.

The report shall address: 1) operation and maintenance costs of using compressed natural gas or other alternatively fueled buses versus diesel fuel or gasoline buses; 2) safety factors; 3) capital costs; and 4) other considerations, including air quality benefits.

The report shall be submitted to the House and Senate Education Committees and the Washington 2000 Committee by December 15, 1991.

The sum of \$25,000 is appropriated to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to complete the report.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The study is broadened to include other alternative school bus fuels besides compressed natural gas. Distribution of the report is expanded to the Washington 2000 Committee.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Appropriation: \$25,000.

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

Testimony For: The bill responds to concerns expressed about whether use of compressed natural gas is more dangerous than conventional fuels and whether there is loss of performance. School districts using compressed natural gas have experienced fuel cost savings and reduced engine maintenance requirements.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Vance, prime sponsor; Norm Lowry, Business Director, Tumwater School District; Kim Lyons, State Energy Office; and Larry Berdan, Washington Natural Gas Company (in charge of Compressed Natural Gas Vehicle fuel program).