

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2821

*As Passed House
February 17, 1992*

Title: An act relating to designating certain communities as additional timber impact areas.

Brief Description: Allowing communities closely associated with timber impact areas to be included in programs for dislocated forest products workers.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Jones, Bowman, Kremen, Wynne, Rayburn, Hargrove, Basich, Scott, Ogden, Morris, Riley, Haugen, Sheldon, Rasmussen, J. Kohl, Franklin, Brekke and Brumsickle.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:

Trade & Economic Development, February 6, 1992, DP;

Passed House, February 17, 1992, 97-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cantwell, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Forner, Ranking Minority Member; Betrozoff, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ferguson; Kremen; Ludwig; Moyer; Rasmussen; Riley; and Roland.

Staff: James Thurston (786-7349).

Background: Reduced timber harvest levels in Washington affect areas around the state differently. Those communities whose economic base is primarily reliant on the timber industry are the most adversely affected.

In 1991, the Legislature created several programs to assist communities, businesses, workers and families in timber impact areas. The legislation specifically defines what constitutes a timber impact area. The Department of Employment Security determines which counties, cities and towns meet the statutory eligibility criteria. Currently there are 20 counties that qualify as timber impact areas.

State funds budgeted for the capital and operating costs of the timber impact area assistance programs exceed \$56

million for the 1991-93 biennium. The Interagency Task Force and the Timber Recovery Coordinator, created by the same 1991 legislation, coordinate the assistance programs to the timber impact areas. Because funds are limited, the Interagency Timber Task Force has focussed its efforts and resources on eligible areas that it has determined to be in greatest need.

Summary of Bill: The definition of timber impact area in the timber programs created by the 1991 legislation is broadened to include communities that are socially and economically integrated with those areas meeting the current definition.

The Economic Recovery Coordinating Board determines which additional communities meet the new criteria.

Eligibility for the basic health plan is expanded to include not just dislocated forest products workers and their families, but all persons in timber impact areas.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 3, 1992.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Some local communities that are not in eligible timber impact counties are still adversely affected by reductions in timber harvests. Such communities might be economically and socially connected to eligible timber impact areas and would benefit from participation in timber assistance programs. The Economic Recovery Coordinating Board is comprised of representatives from the timber impact areas and could effectively determine which communities outside of timber impact counties should be eligible for timber assistance programs. With this board making those decisions, there would be no risk of diluting finite timber assistance dollars by allowing non-qualified communities to participate in the programs.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Evan Jones, Prime Sponsor (Pro); and Greg Dohrn, Department of Social and Human Services and Governor's Timber Team (Pro).