

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5552

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 15, 1991

Brief Description: Requiring certification of water systems operators.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Energy & Utilities (originally sponsored by Senators Barr, Madsen and Williams; by request of Department of Health).

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5552 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Thorsness, Chairman; Saling, Vice Chairman; Jesernig, Nelson, Stratton, and Sutherland.

Staff: Dave Monthie (786-7198)

Hearing Dates: February 22, 1991; February 28, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Existing state law requires that each public water system with 100 or more service connections, or which has a water source that must be filtered, must have an operator certified by the Department of Health. Certificates are issued to individuals who pass a written examination, pay a fee, and otherwise meet the department's requirements. Certificates are renewable annually.

Recent amendments to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act require that each state certify the operators of public water systems that have a groundwater source that may become polluted from surface water.

SUMMARY:

"Group A" water systems are defined to conform to the definition of federally regulated public water systems (those with 15 or more connections or that regularly serve 25 or more people per day). Language is added to make clear that systems with fewer than 15 connections that serve single-family households are not "group A" systems, regardless of the number of people served. "Public water system" is redefined to make it consistent with the definition in the state Safe Drinking Water Act, but excluding on-farm systems with four or fewer connections. Definitions are provided for "service," "surface water," and "groundwater under the direct influence of surface water."

Certified operators are required for all Group A water systems using a surface water source or a groundwater source under the

direct influence of surface water. The length of time before a person whose certificate is revoked can apply for a new one is extended from six months to one year. Technical changes are made to provide consistent use of the term "public water system" and to correct references to the Department of Health's authority.

The Secretary of Health is directed, when categorizing systems for the purpose of protecting public health and implementing the state Safe Drinking Water Act, to consider the economic impacts as well as the degree and nature of any public health risk.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

The bill makes changes in existing state law to bring it into compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Eric Slagle, Department of Health (pro)