
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1706

State of Washington

53rd Legislature

1993 Regular Session

By House Committee on Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Dunshee, Wolfe, Rust, Valle, Pruitt, Linville and Jacobsen)

Read first time 03/03/93.

1 AN ACT Relating to metals mining; and creating new sections.

2 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

4 (1) State and federal laws governing surface mining are antiquated
5 and do not provide adequate regulatory safeguards for modern metals
6 mining processes such as the open-pit chemical leach process.

7 (2) Recent experience in several other western states has shown
8 that underregulated chemical leach mining operations can result in
9 large-scale environmental problems including the permanent scarring of
10 large areas of land and the permanent poisoning of ground and surface
11 water. Federal, state, and local governments, as well as the mining
12 industry, face enormous costs in attempting to reclaim land and clean
13 up hazardous wastes associated with the process.

14 (3) The mining industry has shown an increasing interest to begin
15 opening large-scale chemical leach mines in Washington to exploit low-
16 grade deposits of gold and other valuable minerals in the state.

17 The legislature declares that a specific state policy to regulate
18 the open-pit chemical leach mining process should be established to

1 protect the environment, health, and economic well-being of the people
2 of the state.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A task force on chemical leach mining is
4 established to develop recommended legislation to better regulate the
5 development, operation, and reclamation of open-pit chemical leach
6 mines in Washington. In developing the recommended legislation, the
7 task force shall address, at a minimum, the following issues:

8 (1) Establishing a specific state policy on regulating open-pit
9 chemical leach mines, including the identification of a lead state
10 regulatory agency;

11 (2) Identifying funding sources to support regulation, monitoring,
12 and enforcement, including potential processing fees and royalty
13 payments;

14 (3) Establishing procedures for the concurrent reclamation of mine
15 sites;

16 (4) Establishing bond requirements sufficient to cover the
17 potential costs of large-scale cleanups;

18 (5) Establishing minimum standards for the containment and
19 detoxification of mine and mill wastes;

20 (6) Establishing civil and criminal penalties sufficient to provide
21 a strong deterrent to potential violators and to encourage the timely
22 correction of instances of noncompliance;

23 (7) Establishing permitting requirements that prevent mine
24 operators who are currently in violation of or out of compliance with
25 other state or federal mining laws from operating in Washington.

26 The task force shall consist of fourteen members. Two members of
27 the house of representatives shall be appointed by the speaker of the
28 house of representatives and two members of the senate shall be
29 appointed by the president of the senate. The governor shall appoint
30 the remaining ten members as follows: The commissioner of public lands
31 and the director of the department of ecology, or their designees; two
32 representatives of the mining industry and two representatives of
33 environmental organizations; four representatives of the general
34 public, two residing west of the Cascade mountains and two residing
35 east of the mountains.

1 The task force shall submit recommended legislation to the governor
2 and to the appropriate committees of the legislature no later than
3 January 1, 1994.

--- END ---