

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1016

As Reported By House Committee On:

Capital Budget

Title: An act relating to transferring Lind property to Washington State University.

Brief Description: Transferring property to Washington State University Lind dryland research unit.

Sponsors: Representatives Schoesler, Honeyford, McMorris, Carlson, Boldt, Mason, Sheahan, Buck, Ogden, Huff, Grant, Chandler and Clements; by request of Washington State University.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Capital Budget: 1/21/97, 1/24/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Sehlin, Chairman; Honeyford, Vice Chairman; Ogden, Ranking Minority Member; Sullivan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hankins; Koster; Lantz; Mitchell; D. Sommers and H. Sommers.

Staff: Bill Robinson (786-7140).

Background: The Department of Natural Resources controls and manages all land acquired by the state by either tax default, gift, or purchase, department decides to sell state land, it can be sold either at a public auction or by direct sale to another public agency. State land can also be marketed and sold to private and commercial entities, at a price no lower than the appraised value, if approved by the board of natural resources.

In 1982, by a benefactor in her will, Washington was named as beneficiary of a 1,000 acre farm, located next to the Washington State University Lind Dryland Research unit, and a house in the city of Lind. The benefactor recently died, and the property, which is in the final stages of probate, is about to be deeded to the Department of Natural Resources, consistent with the normal procedure for gifts of land to the state. The land will be managed by the department in the same manner as school lands.

The Washington State University Lind Dryland Research unit, which conducts research on dryland farming techniques, has been in the market to purchase farm land in the Lind area to expand the Unit's research activities. After being notified of the willed property, WSU began discussions with the Department of Natural Resources to transfer the farm property to the research unit.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Legislature finds that it is in the best interest of the state to distribute the property willed to the state by Cleora Neare to Washington State University and public schools. Washington State University is granted ownership of the farm land located next to the Lind Dryland Research unit without cost other than the cost of probate. The property will become part of the Washington State University Lind Dryland Research unit, and all income from current leases on the land will be deposited into a local account for the benefit of the research unit.

The house in the city of Lind will be sold and the proceeds from the sale deposited into the permanent common school fund.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Directs the Department of Natural Resources to sell the house in the city of Lind that was part of the property willed to the state. The proceeds from the sale must be deposited into the permanent common school fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The Lind Dryland Research unit provides valuable research that produces new varieties of wheat and improves dryland farming techniques. The research unit is in need of additional land to continue its research, and this property provides a unique opportunity for the research unit. The house could also be used by WSU as office space or a residence for personnel at the research unit with minor remodeling. Property that is given to the state has been traditionally managed for the benefit of public schools. If the land is transferred to WSU, the school trust should be compensated or some other action taken to prevent the land transfer from setting a precedent for a new policy on such lands.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Mark Schoesler, prime sponsor; Mike Roberts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (with concern); Jenny Stiles, Washington Cattlemen's Association; and Larry Ganders, Washington State University.