

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4018

As Passed House:
February 2, 2004

Brief Description: Requesting Congress to enter trade agreements that are more fair to domestic agricultural businesses.

Sponsors: By Representatives Blake, Veloria and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Trade & Economic Development: 2/28/03, 3/4/03 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/13/03, 96-0.

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/2/04, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Communicates the Washington Legislature's desire that fairer trade agreements be developed to create a level playing field for our domestic farmers and orchardists.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Veloria, Chair; Eickmeyer, Vice Chair; Skinner, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chase, Condotta, Kristiansen, McCoy, Pettigrew and Priest.

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

Background:

There are an estimated 185,000 acres devoted to commercial apple production in Washington. There are more than 3,800 growers registered with the Washington Apple Commission. In 1999, 123 million 42-pound boxes of apples were produced in Washington. All Washington apples are hand-picked. The estimated value of the state's apples for fresh consumption was \$774 million and \$75.6 for processed apples in 1999. Thirty percent of Washington's crop is sold overseas each year. The top 10 export markets for 1999-2000 were: Mexico, Taiwan, Canada, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Kingdom, Venezuela and Dubai.

Washington growers comply with stringent pesticide regulations to ensure the high quality and safety of all the state's apples. The use of pesticides is strictly regulated by state and federal law. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates agrichemicals and the way that they may be used. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) assures compliance with those standards by inspecting produce before shipment and at the market.

Summary of Bill:

The joint memorial communicates to President George W. Bush, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from Washington, the state Legislature's desire to see trade agreements developed that provide a level playing field for the state's farmers and orchardists.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Testimony For: The Washington apple industry is facing difficult times. Although it produces a high quality product, it is getting more difficult to export apples because of trade barriers in other countries. Also, many overseas apple growers receive government support, whereas the apple industry in the United States has been almost completely self-sufficient. Negotiations continue on a number of trade fronts; however, it often seems that agriculture does not receive priority consideration and is therefore the subject of concessions. This makes the playing field uneven. The goal of this memorial is to have the government negotiate fair trade agreements.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jim Halstrom, Washington State Horticultural Association.