

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6731

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, February 5, 2004

Title: An act relating to standards and grades for fruits and vegetables.

Brief Description: Concerning standards and grades for fruits and vegetables.

Sponsors: Senators Honeyford, Mulliken and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture: 2/5/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6731 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Swecker, Chair; Brandland, Vice Chair; Jacobsen, Rasmussen and Sheahan.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: Currently, it is mandatory that the Department of Agriculture establish grades and standards that asparagus must meet. For several other agricultural commodities, the department has discretion to establish standards. Additional flexibility is sought to assist the asparagus industry in selling product in other states.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The requirement that the Department of Agriculture adopt rules that provide standards for asparagus is deleted. The permissive authority to establish standards is retained.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill includes an emergency clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Asparagus fields are very expensive to establish and once planted will produce a crop for 15 years. It is not like other crops where you can just seed something else the next year. With the closure of two major plants in the state who were the largest buyers of asparagus, producers are looking for a new home including selling it to out of state buyers. This bill allows the department the flexibility to address in rule the needs of the industry.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor; Charlie Brown, WA Asparagus Commission.