

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8004

As Passed Senate, March 17, 2003

Brief Description: Requesting that British Columbia refrain from releasing grizzly bears near our common border.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Haugen, Hargrove and T. Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Parks, Fish & Wildlife: 2/25/03, 3/3/03 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/17/03, 35-14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PARKS, FISH & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Oke, Chair; Sheahan, Vice Chair; Doumit, Esser, Morton and Swecker.

Staff: Genevieve Pisarski (786-7488)

Background: The Province of British Columbia will be relocating a number of grizzly bears from other parts of Canada to an area that borders the state of Washington as part of a bear recovery plan. The natural range of the bears is expected to bring them into the state. State law prohibits introduction of grizzly bears and requires protection of native grizzly bear populations in suitable areas.

Summary of Bill: The Province of British Columbia is asked to refrain from releasing grizzly bears where their range is likely to extend into the state. If the Province determines that such release is necessary, it is asked to provide DNA samples, implant microchips, and provide information to the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: The part of our state into which released bears will range has become more densely populated and natural forage is insufficient. This will result in increased predation on livestock, crops, and humans. Release of bears in British Columbia is a way of circumventing state law that prohibits introduction of bears.

Testimony Against: Grizzly bears are in danger of becoming extinct in the Northwest without augmentation programs. Only two bears will be released each year for five years. Surveys show that 77 percent of Washington residents support grizzly bear recovery.

Testified: Senator Morton, prime sponsor (pro); Seth Cool, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance (con); Sid Viebrock, WA Cattlemen's Assn. (pro).

