

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8009

As of March 7, 2005

Brief Description: Petitioning for the creation of a new state in Eastern Washington.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, McCaslin, Mulliken, Stevens, Delvin, Deccio, Parlette, Schoesler, Swecker, Honeyford and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/22/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Genevieve Pisarski (786-7488)

Background: Article IV, Section 3 of the United States Constitution prohibits a new state from being formed within the jurisdiction of any other state or any state to be formed by the junction of two or more states or parts of states without the consent of congress and of the legislatures of the states concerned.

Summary of Bill: As a result of historical, cultural, and economic differences between eastern and western Washington, the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Washington petition for that portion of the state from the crest of the Cascade Mountains east to the existing state border to become a separate and independent state. These memorialists request that the Congress of the United States consent to the formation of this new state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Testimony For: Eastern Washington needs different economic policy and priorities. The Columbia River Initiative will sacrifice economic use of water upstream to benefit downstream fisheries. Okanogan County is eighty percent public land; this land is treated as a playground, when it should be part of the county's tax base. Environmental regulations have hurt the resource industries of the region. The region should be able to have as Governor the person whom the voters of the region chose. Transportation funding and sales tax stay on the westside, while payment in lieu of taxes has steadily declined. The plurality on the westside violates its trust responsibility to the eastside; it pursues its own priorities for managing forests and agricultural lands against the economic interests of the eastside. It's true that the eastside isn't always a revenue donor, but environmental regulations are preventing it from developing economically and generating revenue. Other regulators, as well, who focus on westside issues, like Labor and Industries, are driving employers out of the region. Transportation is only one example of where westside counties have consistently gotten a lower return for each dollar contributed than eastside counties, and the difference is growing. The westside

continues to subsidize the eastside. Separation will lower taxes in Western Washington. The eastside voted for I-695; then westside state money backfilled the resulting public health funding cuts.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Morton, Prime Sponsor; Senator McCaslin; Senator Kline; Andrew Johnson, Republican Party; Mary Lou Peterson, Okanogan County Commissioner; Merrill Ott, Stevens County Commissioner; Mark Richard, Spokane County.