
**Select Committee on
Environmental Health**

HB 3282

Brief Description: Requiring Washington State University to research and develop alternatives to petrochemical-based plastic and styrofoam.

Sponsors: Representative Chase.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Washington State University (WSU) must research and develop nonfood-based compostable plastic that can be used in place of petroleum-based plastic bags, petroleum-based plastic bottles, and petroleum-based styrofoam single-use food service packaging.
- WSU must present its research in a report to the Governor and to the Legislature by December 1, 2008.

Hearing Date: 1/31/08

Staff: Ashley Pedersen (786-7303).

Background:

According to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, in 2006 the United States generated about 14 million tons of plastics in the municipal solid waste stream as containers and packaging, over 6 million tons as nondurable goods, and almost 9 million tons as durable goods.

The total amount of plastics in municipal solid waste—almost 30 million tons—represented 11.7 percent of total municipal solid waste generation in 2006. Plastics are a rapidly growing segment of the municipal solid waste stream. The largest category of plastics are found in containers and packaging (e.g., soft drink bottles, lids, shampoo bottles), but they also are found in durable (e.g., appliances, furniture) and nondurable goods (e.g., diapers, trash bags, cups and utensils, medical devices).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The overall recovery of plastics for recycling is relatively small - 1.4 million tons, or 3.9 percent of plastics generation in 2003. Recovery of some plastic containers has reached higher levels.

While compostable plastics are being made from food crops such as corn, there has not been extensive development of compostable plastics or styrofoam made from nonfood crops and biomass.

Summary of Bill:

Washington State University (WSU) must research and develop nonfood-based compostable plastic that can be used in place of petroleum-based plastic bags, petroleum-based plastic bottles, and petroleum-based styrofoam single-use food service packaging.

WSU must consult with representatives from the petroleum-based plastic and petroleum-based styrofoam industries and other stakeholders and prepare a report.

The report must include an evaluation of all alternative nonfood-based compostable plastic that have been researched and developed. In evaluating alternatives, WSU must consider:

- environmental impacts caused by the cultivation and harvest of the plant or plants that form the biobase of the alternative;
- environmental impacts of manufacturing, use, composting, recycling and disposal of the alternative;
- effectiveness and performance of each alternative as a replacement for petroleum-based plastic bags, petroleum-based plastic bottles, and petroleum-based styrofoam; and
- economic impacts of implementing each alternative option.

WSU must present its research in a report to the Governor and to the Legislature by December 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 25, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.