

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5861

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, February 22, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to special assessments for conservation district activities and programs.

**Brief Description:** Regarding special assessments for conservation districts.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rasmussen, Jacobsen and Kastama.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 2/15/07, 2/22/07 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Morton and Shin.

**Staff:** Bob Lee (786-7404)

**Background:** In 1989, a process was established to allow funds to be generated for programs and activities provided by conservation districts by establishing special assessments on lands within the districts. The process is initiated by a conservation district board, which holds a public hearing on a proposal. On or before August 1 in the year prior to which it is proposed that special assessments be collected, the conservation district may file a proposed system of special assessments and a proposed budget with the county legislative authority. The county legislative authority is required to hold a public hearing and then may accept or modify the proposal. To establish special assessments, the county legislative authority must find that the public interest will be served and that special assessments imposed on any land will not exceed the special benefit that the land will receive. The actual cost of collecting special assessments are to be deducted by the county treasurer from the revenue generated by the special assessments. The maximum rate of assessment is ten cents per acre or \$5 per parcel, or both. Such assessments may continue for a period of up to ten years. In 2005, the maximum per parcel assessment rate was increased to \$10 per parcel for counties with a population in excess of 1.5 million people.

**Summary of Bill:** For counties with a population of between 750,000 and 1.5 million people, the maximum annual per parcel rate shall not exceed \$10, with all funds generated above \$5 being dedicated to assisting commercial agricultural operations within the district's boundaries.

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*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.*

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The secret to success for having an assessment approved is for the programs to come from local folks. Over the last ten years in Pierce County, a lot of farmers have retired or have just quit. Pierce County is attempting to revitalize agriculture and has established the Farming Assistance Revitalization Program (FARM) to try to retain the remaining agriculture. A poll indicated that 65 percent of the population would support family farms. The Pierce Conservation District is comfortable with the restriction that the additional \$5 assessment would be for agricultural programs.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Fred Colvin, Washington State Association of Conservation Districts; Ron Sasaki, Ron Sasaki Farms; Monty Mahan, Pierce Conservation District; Brynn Brady, Pierce County Planning; Sara Hemphill, King Conservation District.