

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8028

As Passed Senate, February 19, 2008

Brief Description: Requesting that the President and Congress support the participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Berkey, Honeyford, Hobbs, Swecker, Delvin, Roach, Rasmussen and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/07/08 [DP].
Passed Senate: 2/19/08, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Fairley, Kastama, Kohl-Welles and Marr.

Staff: Mich'l Needham (786-7442)

Background: The World Health Organization (WHO) is one of the original agencies of the United Nations. Responsibilities of the WHO include: the international classification of disease; producing health guidelines and standards; assisting countries in addressing public health concerns; coordinating international responses to infectious diseases, such as smallpox, polio, and most recently, SARS and Avian Flu; supporting research; and working to prevent chronic diseases and enhance global health security. All countries which are members of the United Nations may become members of WHO by accepting its Constitution. Other countries may be admitted as members when their application has been approved by a simple majority vote of the World Health Assembly. Territories which are not responsible for the conduct of their international relations may be admitted as associate members upon application made on their behalf by the member or other authority responsible for their international relations.

The United States maintains strong, unofficial relations with Taiwan, and has supported Taiwan's membership in appropriate international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, where statehood is not a requirement for membership.

Summary of Bill: Congress, the President of the United States, and others, are urged to support Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Although Taiwan is small it is an important economic partner. It is the fourth largest trading partner with Washington state, and is very interested in global participation. Taiwan is a hub of human and economic traffic and very concerned with collaboration to address infectious diseases and potential public health epidemics. It is important to be directly immersed in up-to-date public health information. Any delay of information may negatively impact the health of the people of Taiwan. Participation in the World Health Organization would ensure Taiwan is part of the international efforts to fight disease.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Robert Chen, Director General Taipei Economic and Cultural Office.