

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6343

As Amended by House, March 5, 2010

Title: An act relating to the establishment of the Washington food policy forum.

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington food policy forum.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles, Swecker, Haugen, Hatfield and Keiser).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 1/21/10, 2/02/10 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/15/10, 45-3.

Passed House: 3/05/10, 72-26.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6343 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hatfield, Chair; Ranker, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Haugen, Jacobsen, Morton and Shin.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: Food policy councils (FPCs) have been formed in different regions of the United States. Some are formed by cities, counties, and states, and some by nongovernmental organizations. Generally, these councils are comprised from various stakeholders of a local food system. Typically, councils are sanctioned through governmental action such as a Governor's Executive Order, state law, or local ordinance. Some FPCs have formed through grassroots efforts and operate without an official convening document. FPCs often involve innovative collaborations between citizen groups and government officials to give voice to concerns and interests in a range of topics including: food production, nutrition, obesity, hunger, and other food system related issues.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Washington Food Policy Forum is established to develop recommendations to advance the following food system goals:

1. increase production, sales, and consumption of Washington-grown foods;

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2. develop and promote programs that bring healthy Washington grown foods to its residents, including increased state purchasing of local food products for school, adult care programs, and other state funded food programs;
3. review and develop programs that support proper nutrition and avoid burdens of obesity and chronic diet-related diseases;
4. to protect the land and water resources needed for sustained food production;
5. to examine ways to encourage retention of an adequate number of farmers, education needs for an adequate agricultural workforce and provide for continued economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution; and
6. to reduce food insecurity and hunger in the state and ensure the benefits of a healthy food system is shared with families at all income levels, particularly vulnerable children, the elderly, the disabled, and communities of color.

The forum has seven agency, two university, and 14 interest group representatives. The state agency and university representatives are invited to participate include:

1. the director of the Department of Agriculture;
2. the secretary of the Department of Health;
3. the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
4. the director of the Department of Commerce;
5. the secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services;
6. the dean of the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences at Washington State University;
7. the director of the Department of Ecology;
8. the Office of Farmland Preservation; and
9. a representative from the University of Washington who has expertise in food systems or nutrition appointed by its president.

The following public members must be appointed by the Governor:

1. five farmer representatives;
2. a food distribution, processing, and marketing representative;
3. a representative of direct-to-consumer marketing;
4. a representative of community-based efforts to address nutrition and public health;
5. a representative who represents nongovernmental statewide anti-hunger efforts;
6. a representative of food banks;
7. a representative of a nongovernmental statewide organization with interest in protection of the state's land, air and water;
8. one person representing retail grocers;
9. one representative from a labor union that represents workers in the food industry; and
10. one representative from the international trade sector with expertise in the trade of food products.

The chair of the forum will be elected by the members. At the first meeting the forum must elect a chair, identify funding sources, and begin to develop a work plan.

No state agency or state university may be compelled to incur expenses in connection with the operation of the forum. Appointed public members of the forum must serve without compensation from state funds. Members of the forum may receive reimbursement from the

forum for travel expenses if funds for forum operations are available as determined by the director of the Office of Financial Management.

The forum must report its initial findings and recommendations by December 1 of the year following the date of the second meeting of the forum and annually after that. The reports are to be submitted to the Governor, the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives, and the Secretary of the Senate.

The forum expires on July 1, 2015.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The state loses 70,000 acres of farmland each year, the average age of a farmer is 57, 61 percent of Washington residents are either overweight or obese. There currently is no mechanism for various food related programs administered by various state agencies to be looked at comprehensively. The Federal Farm Bill has grant funds available from the Food and Agricultural Initiative to look at multiple disciplinary approaches to solving a range of food related issues. The decline in younger farmers, the health of the soil, and the nutritional value of food are of concern. There needs to be a better mechanism for the multiple stakeholders interested in food policy to sit down and talk about their issues.

CON: The composition is unbalanced and more farmer representatives are needed.

OTHER: Grocery stores are an essential link in the food system and to mainstream various goals such as accessing local foods; the grocers need to be involved.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Ellen Gray, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network; Jim Baird, Baird Orchards; Tim Crosby, NW Agricultural Business Center; Victor Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition; Janet Bissell, Tahoma Food Policy Coalition; Jim Goche, Market Garden NW, LLC; Mo McBroom, Washington Environmental Council.

OTHER: Carolyn Logue, Washington Food Industry.

CON: Dan Wood, Washington Farm Bureau.

House Amendment(s): A representative from two sectors were added to the forum; the restaurant sector and the commercial fishing sector. The director of the Department of Agriculture is to make the appointments instead of the Governor. The director of the State Conservation Commission is to appoint the person to convene the first meeting of the forum rather than the Governor.