
SENATE BILL 6372

State of Washington

61st Legislature

2010 Regular Session

By Senators Jacobsen and Shin

Read first time 01/13/10. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources,
Ocean & Recreation.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating a task force to review conservation
2 district functions and operations for the twenty-first century;
3 creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the state's
6 conservation district laws were enacted seven decades ago based on
7 circumstances that were significantly different from what exists today.
8 The legislature finds that these districts provide a valuable service
9 with their unique and proven approach to stewardship of private land,
10 water, and natural resources especially in areas with altered and built
11 environments. Districts are noted for their high degree of success in
12 engaging with private landowners in terms of developing practical
13 solutions cooperatively with landowners on a range of land, water, and
14 natural resource stewardship concerns. The legislature finds that this
15 cooperative voluntary approach is especially important today in highly
16 populated urban and suburban areas and, given the Puget Sound
17 initiative, in the western region of the state.

18 However, the legislature believes that conservation districts have
19 not been able to fully achieve their potential to advance workable

1 solutions for improved stewardship of natural resources. As a result,
2 the gap in understanding between rural landowner needs and concerns and
3 those of urban constituencies continues to exist and cause significant
4 tension. Further, given projected population growth with its attendant
5 impacts, given the imperative to achieve and maintain healthy major
6 waterways such as the Columbia and Spokane rivers and Puget Sound, and
7 given the growing realization that food security from local sources is
8 dependent upon the continued viability of local farming operations,
9 there is a critical need at this time to evaluate the functions and
10 operations of conservation districts.

11 The purpose of this act is to convene a broadly based task force to
12 examine the conservation district laws, review the functions and
13 operations of conservation districts, and to recommend changes that
14 will allow conservation districts to be more effective in fulfilling
15 their roles and mission in addressing twenty-first century needs.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The conservation district task force is
17 established. The task force shall consist of the following members:

18 (a) One member representing the state conservation commission
19 appointed by the chair of the state conservation commission;

20 (b) One member representing the Puget Sound partnership appointed
21 by its leadership council;

22 (c) Up to seven members representing the range of conservation
23 districts in the state, one of whom shall be from a county with a
24 population that exceeds one million five hundred thousand people,
25 appointed by the state association representing conservation districts;

26 (d) Three representatives of statewide agricultural associations,
27 one of whom shall be from an organization that represents livestock
28 producers, appointed by the governor in consultation with the director
29 of agriculture;

30 (e) Two representatives of statewide environmental organizations
31 that have an ongoing interest and experience in working with
32 conservation districts on projects and activities in the existing
33 altered and built environments and with land trusts, appointed by the
34 governor;

35 (f) Two representatives of cities reflecting the size spectrum of
36 cities, appointed by a statewide association representing city
37 governments; and

1 (g) Two representatives of county governments, one whom shall
2 represent counties with a population of over five hundred thousand,
3 appointed by the state association representing county governments.

4 (2) Tribal governments shall be invited by the governor to send a
5 representative who is familiar with agricultural and urban concerns to
6 serve on the task force.

7 (3) The task force shall examine the following:

8 (a) The process of selecting conservation district board members
9 and whether the method of selecting members should be altered;

10 (b) The methods by which conservation district activities are
11 funded and whether the source of funding districts should be altered,
12 including revenue from conservation district assessments and from state
13 funding sources;

14 (c) The current role and mission of conservation districts and
15 whether conservation districts are structured to effectively fulfill
16 their role and mission;

17 (d) The jurisdictional areas of conservation districts and whether
18 the differences between urban and rural areas are being successfully
19 bridged by conservation district programs;

20 (e) What needs that conservation districts are filling and what the
21 public expectations are in the twenty-first century;

22 (f) What makes natural resource stewardship projects and activities
23 successful by inquiring with various groups with experience including
24 the Ruckelshaus center, local salmon recovery boards, conservation
25 districts, and the participants of successful programs; and

26 (g) Other issues relevant to operation and function of conservation
27 districts identified in the governor's natural resources reform report,
28 including but not limited to the conservation incentives service
29 delivery proposal.

30 (4) The task force shall vote to select its chair or cochairs.

31 (5) The task force shall be staffed by a facilitator who has proven
32 understanding of the differences between urban, suburban, and rural
33 culture and values, and has experience and familiarity with successful
34 implementation of conservation programs. The facilitator, or
35 cofacilitators, shall be appointed as independent contractors by the
36 governor in consultation with this act's sponsoring legislators.

37 (6) The task force shall issue a report of its findings and

1 conclusions by December 1, 2011, to the governor's office, the chief
2 clerk of the house of representatives and the secretary of the senate.

3 (7) This section expires March 1, 2012.

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