

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5799

As of February 18, 2013

Title: An act relating to establishing a tourism stakeholder task force for the purpose of increasing trade and economic development in Washington state.

Brief Description: Establishing a tourism stakeholder task force for the purpose of increasing trade and economic development in Washington state.

Sponsors: Senators Schlicher, Kohl-Welles, Murray and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Trade & Economic Development: 2/19/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Edward Redmond (786-7471)

Background: According to the 2012 report by the Washington Council on International Trade and the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle entitled "An International Competitiveness Strategy for Washington State," approximately 500,000 international tourists travel to Washington State annually. In 2010, Washington State posted a 32 percent increase over 2009 overseas visitor volumes, which was the largest increase in the nation and accounted for an estimated \$15.2 billion of traveler spending in the state. The report found that the growth has been led by visitors from Europe, Japan, and increasingly from China, which respectively accounted for approximately 40,000 visitors in 2011.

Prior to 2011, the Washington State Tourism Commission (Commission) was responsible for expanding the tourism industry throughout the state and worked in collaboration with the public and private tourism development organizations to carry out its mandate. The Commission had an operating budget of approximately \$4.5 million; due to budgetary constraints, the Legislature defunded the state's tourism office in 2011. Washington is currently the only state in nation without a state-funded tourism office.

The Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) was formed by industry representatives in response to the closure of the state's tourism office. Since formation, assets from the state's tourism office including the call center, state visitor's guide, and website have been transferred to the WTA and membership has increased to over 440 members. Currently, the WTA operates with an annual budget of approximately \$427,000.

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.

Summary of Bill: A tourism stakeholder taskforce is created by the Legislature. It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a working group comprised of public and private sector stakeholders in order to identify possible long-term funding solutions for a statewide tourism marketing program which incorporate private-public partnerships.

The tourism taskforce is comprised of representatives from the Department of Revenue, Department of Commerce, Washington Public Ports Association, Washington Restaurant Association, WTA, Washington Lodging Association, and other private sector and nonprofit organizations interested in tourism. The taskforce must convene at least three times over the interim and discuss issues related to long-term funding of tourism and the proper governance structure.

Specific recommendations to the Legislature are due by December 1, 2013. The taskforce expires December 1, 2013.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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