
Technology & Economic Development Committee

SB 6545

Brief Description: Creating a task force on Washington's clean energy economy.

Sponsors: Senator Ericksen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a task force to make recommendations to the Legislature for changes to the state's energy, environmental, regulatory, and tax policies to enhance the health of Washington's manufacturing sector.

Hearing Date: 2/24/16

Staff: Jasmine Vasavada (786-7301).

Background:

Manufacturing Sector.

Washington provides a number of incentives for manufacturers, including business and occupation tax rate reductions, credits, exemptions, and deductions; sales and use tax exemptions and deferrals; property tax exemptions; and low-interest, tax-free industrial revenue bonds administered by the Washington Economic Development Finance Authority. The November forecast published by the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council estimates Washington's manufacturing employment at 288,900 employees in 2015.

Washington's Electricity Mix.

Washington's network of hydroelectric power plants is the largest in the nation and contributes to combined retail and industrial electricity prices across all sectors that are among the lowest in the nation. Nearly 75 percent of the state's electric power comes from renewable resources. Hydropower, solar, and wind generation result in near-zero carbon emissions at the point of energy production.

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.

Carbon Footprint.

A carbon footprint is an assessment of the impact on carbon emissions of a product across the entire life cycle of producing and using the product. Large retailers are requesting more information from their suppliers about product-level environmental impacts, including carbon footprints. In 2014 Washington and Oregon convened an Advisory Group of stakeholders to better understand footprinting standards and programs, taking into account the experience and perspective of area business and program and policy options that would most benefit businesses and consumers in the Pacific Northwest.

Summary of Bill:

Duties of the Task Force.

A joint legislative task force on Washington's clean energy economy (Task Force) is established to make recommendations to the Legislature for making changes to the state's energy, environmental, regulatory, and tax policies to enhance the health of Washington's manufacturing sector. The Task Force must hold two meetings, one located in Whatcom County and one in Grant County. The Task Force must take testimony, order and review reports, and take action necessary for informing their deliberations. The Task Force must produce a report making recommendations to the Legislature prior to December 31, 2016. The report must include recommendations to the Legislature for making changes to the state's energy, environmental, regulatory, and tax policies to enhance the health of Washington's manufacturing sector. No member of the Task Force is required to sign, support, or otherwise endorse the report or any part of it.

Establishment of the Task Force.

The Task Force must consist of eight legislators, two from each major caucus in the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker, and two from each major caucus in the Senate appointed by the leaders of each caucus. Members must continue to serve until they are no longer members of the Legislature. The Task Force must choose a chair and vice-chair at its first official meeting. The chair must be a member appointed by a leader of one of the two largest caucuses in the Senate, and the vice-chair must be a member appointed by the Speaker of the House. Senate Committee Services and the Office of Program Research must provide staff support for the Task Force. The Task Force expires December 31, 2016.

Legislative Findings.

Legislative findings address the state's low emissions profile, leadership in energy efficiency, and small carbon footprint.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.