

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6292

As of February 9, 2016

Title: An act relating to eliminating the reduction in state basic education funding that occurs in counties with federal forest lands.

Brief Description: Eliminating the reduction in state basic education funding that occurs in counties with federal forest lands.

Sponsors: Senators Braun, Becker, Rivers and Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/01/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Federal forests comprise over 21 percent of all of Washington land. The federal government provides a portion of the revenues from the management of these lands to the counties in which the lands are located. The majority of the revenues come from the harvest of timber. A portion of the federal forest revenue must be distributed to the public school district within the county. If there is more than one school district within the county then the funds are distributed in proportion to the number of full-time equivalent students in each respective district.

Prior to 2014, the state basic education allocation to school districts in counties with federal forest lands was reduced by an amount equal to the federal forest revenue that the school district received. Under legislation enacted in 2014, the state basic education allocation to a school district with a poverty level of at least 57 percent is reduced only by the portion of federal forest revenues that exceeds \$70,000. A school district's poverty level is determined by the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch in the previous school year.

The 2015-17 biennial budget included a proviso that school districts receiving federal forest funds must not have their basic education allocation reduced during the 2015-17 biennium.

Summary of Bill: The reduction of a school district's basic education allocation due to receipt of federal forest revenue is eliminated.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on September 1, 2016.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is a simple but very important bill. It gets the federal forest revenue to the school districts by eliminating the reduction to the school districts' basic education allocation. We already have this policy in the the biennial budget as a temporary fix. This would put it into statute and allow us to count on the money in the future. About 215 school districts across the state currently receive some amount of federal forest revenue. The school districts that would benefit most from this legislation are those in Eastern and Southwestern Washington, and those on the Olympic Peninsula. These school districts have a very limited tax base, weak economies, and huge amounts of federal forest land. The communities, schools, and students could be helped by having full access to the federal forest revenue.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Braun, prime sponsor; Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, Washington State School Director's Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.