

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6535

As of February 4, 2020

Title: An act relating to prohibiting funds available to port districts from being allocated for the purchase of fully automated marine container cargo handling equipment.

Brief Description: Prohibiting funds available to port districts from being allocated for the purchase of fully automated marine container cargo handling equipment.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, Hasegawa and Nguyen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/03/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits port monies from being allocated for the purchase of fully automated marine container cargo handling equipment.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Port districts are special purpose districts established in various counties of the state for, among other things, providing marine terminals, airports, and other facilities for handling cargo and accommodating passengers. Port districts also engage in economic development activities, such as promoting tourism within the district.

Port districts are governed by a directly elected commission, and are financed primarily through local property taxes, but also through service fees, bonds, grants, and gifts.

There are currently 75 port districts in Washington State.

Summary of Bill: Port monies may not be allocated for purchasing fully automated marine container cargo handling equipment. The equipment is defined as equipment remotely operated or monitored, with or without the exercise of human intervention or control.

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.

The bill specifically allows for the use of funds for a project that includes the purchase of human-operated, zero-emission or near zero-emission equipment, and its supporting infrastructure and supporting devices.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Automation at ports should be addressed in contract negotiations, however the bill is needed to ensure public funds are not used to purchase automated cargo handling equipment. Ports sustain family wage jobs. This bill is in response to many zero-emission bills recently introduced before the Legislature that are of concern to longshoremen, which hurt the security of the job force. The parties need to work on this in contract negotiations, but public funds should not be used to subsidize eliminating U.S. jobs and replacing them with foreign-made equipment.

CON: The 2008 coastwide contract already includes negotiated provisions regarding automation, including work guarantees and job retraining. The Ports of Seattle and Tacoma are not at immediate risk of being fully automated. The automated equipment is environmentally friendly. The bill is too restrictive, it would block private contributions to port facilities, and remove needed flexibility to grow ports and employment.

OTHER: The bill is aimed at job retention. The current coastwide contract addresses the issue of automation. The best way to keep jobs is to not remove competitive advantages from Washington ports.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Steve Conway, Prime Sponsor; Todd Iverson, ILWU 23; Dan McKisson, ILWU.

CON: Scott Hazlegrove, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association; Jordan Royer, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association.

OTHER: James Thompson, Washington Public Ports.

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