

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5995

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Local Government, January 22, 2026

**Title:** An act relating to moneys available to a port district allocated for the purchase of zero and near zero emission cargo handling equipment.

**Brief Description:** Concerning moneys available to a port district allocated for the purchase of zero and near zero emission cargo handling equipment.

**Sponsors:** Senators Salomon, Wilson, J. and Hasegawa.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Local Government: 1/15/26, 1/22/26 [DP, w/oRec].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Removes the December 31, 2031 expiration date and extends the prohibition on port districts and port development authorities using port funds to purchase fully automated marine container cargo handling equipment.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Salomon, Chair; Lovelett, Vice Chair; Bateman.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Torres, Ranking Member; Goehner.

**Staff:** Karen Epps (786-7424)

**Background:** Port districts are a type of special purpose district that can be created with voter approval. Port districts can include harbors and marine transport, but can also be

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formed in inland areas without major navigable waterways and can include airports, railroads, and other facilities. Port districts are funded by property taxes, services fees, lease fees, and bonds. Port districts may also receive funding from the federal government and from the state. Currently, there are 75 port districts in Washington.

A port development authority can be created by a port district, or jointly by two port districts if both are located in counties with more than 800,000 people, to manage the maritime activities of the port district or districts. The Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma have formed a port development authority, The Northwest Seaport Alliance.

Marine cargo generally comes in three forms: containerized—cargo transported by container, bulk—cargo transported unpackaged, like grain or oil, and break bulk—cargo, such as a car or barrels, loaded individually, rather than in containers or in bulk. Most non-bulk cargo is transported by intermodal container. Such containers can be transferred between different modes of transportation, for example, from ship to rail, without removing the cargo from the container.

Port districts and port development authorities are prohibited from using port funds to purchase fully automated marine container cargo handling equipment until December 31, 2031. Container cargo handling equipment is fully automated if it is remotely operated or remotely monitored. Port districts may use funds to purchase human-operated zero, or near zero, emission equipment and the infrastructure to support the equipment.

**Summary of Bill:** The expiration date of December 31, 2031, is removed. Port districts and port development authorities are prohibited from using port funds to purchase fully automated marine container cargo handling equipment after December 31, 2031.

**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: This bill makes sure that humans are still valued for the work that they do. The bill eliminates the sunset clause to make sure that Washington taxpayers are not eliminating jobs from communities across Washington State. This bill will help keep our ports operating safely and efficiently with human operation and oversight. This bill extends the prohibition on ports using automated marine cargo handling equipment. Port workers inject life back into the economy, something a robot can never do. The passage of this bill will ensure our tax dollars are never used to undermine the livelihoods of hard-working Washingtonians. This bill does not take the human element out of this work. By preserving the prohibition on public investment in fully automated port

equipment, this bill ensures that public investments in decarbonization goes hand in hand with job creation.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Jesse Salomon, Prime Sponsor; Dan McKisson, President, ILWU WA Area District Council; Kesa Sten, President, ILWU Local 52; Meghan Mason, ILWU Local 23; Nicholas Matson, ILWU 51; Joe Wall, Port of Seattle Tax Payer, Longshore worker Local 19; Waylon Roberts, Sailors Union of the Pacific; Jess Koski, Blue Green Alliance; Captain Dan Twohig, International Association of Masters, Mates and Pilots.

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