

WEEK of Monday, March 8, 2010

Environmental Community

Hot List for the STATE SENATE

This is the weekly Environmental Community "Hot List" detailing positions on no more than ten of the highest priority issues for the upcoming week. Separate Hot Lists are prepared for the House and Senate and distributed each Monday. At the end of the document, you will find a list of environmental community organizations that contributed to the Hot List. Please feel free to contact me at clifford@wcvoters.org or 206-369-2235, if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Clifford R. Traisman, State Lobbyist, Washington Conservation Voters & Washington Environmental Council

SB 6364: Supplemental Capital Budget

Ways and Means: Executive Session

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

- Cuts \$39 million from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP).
- Abandons the nationally recognized priority ranking system and replaces it with a "readiness to proceed" criteria where lower ranked projects would continue while higher ranked projects are cancelled.
- To meet this budget cut contracts will be terminated and matching money will be voided without amending the statute, which will trigger legal risks. The state has no process and information is not available for awarding money and prioritizing projects based on which ones can spend the money first.

POSSIBLE SENATE FLOOR ACTION

SHB 2416: Establishing energy efficiency standards for consumer products.

House refuses to concur in Senate amendments

POSITION: *Please recede from amendments*

- This bill adopts efficiency standards for consumer products including televisions, at no cost to the state or consumers.
- In 2020, these efficiency standards will save Washington energy consumers about \$24.8 million per year. Energy savings will be an estimated 45 annual average megawatts – equal to the average output of about 60 wind turbines.

SHB 2935: Regarding environmental and land use hearings boards and making more uniform the timelines for filing appeals with those boards.

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

- This legislation seeks to streamline the process and timelines for environmental and land use appeals. It is part of the Governor's package to improve the efficiencies of the natural resource agencies.
- The current version ensures that the streamlining efforts also maintain existing levels of public participation and environmental protections. The filing deadlines for appeals that will go to the land use board will stay at 60 days, shoreline permit appeals will stay at 21 days, and all other environmental appeals are given 30 day filing deadlines.

HB 3132: Regarding the elimination of the Columbia River Gorge Compact.

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

- The Columbia River Gorge is a major tourist draw that benefits the Washington economy drawing more than two million visitors a year. The federal government has also invested millions of dollars in the gorge to enhance its economic value to the state including an economic development grants program. An economic downturn is not the time to put these important resources at risk by undoing the compact.
- The Gorge Commission and interstate compact were any alternative to direct federal management of the gorge. Even if the compact is repealed, the gorge will remain a National Scenic Area. Repealing the compact will likely result in direct federal management of the scenic area, not the cooperative local, bi-state, and federal oversight provided by the Columbia River Gorge Commission. This will result in a significant loss of local and state control.

ESHB 3181: The Clean Water Act of 2010 funding cleanup of water pollution and other programs necessary for the health and well-being of Washington citizens through an increase in the hazardous substance tax.

POSITION: *SUPPORT*

- The House bill is a smart compromise for raising critical new revenue to clean up stormwater pollution. The new version of the bill that we anticipate will be passed out of the House this week eliminates the general fund allocation that was in the original bill, adds in an export tax credit (sought by the oil companies) and would increase the Hazardous Substance Tax by only .85 percent, generating \$100 million per year.
- Contrary to oil company assertions, the Hazardous Substance Tax is constitutional. The tax has been in place for 20 years and has never been challenged. Constitutional law expert Hugh Spitzer has issued a legal opinion that concludes without reservation the tax is NOT a gas tax covered by the 18th amendment of the state constitution. This conclusion is supported by a 2001 Attorney General opinion.



SSB 6214: Restructuring three growth management hearings boards into one board.

POSITION: *CONCUR*

- This bill consolidates the 3 growth management hearings boards into 1 board and reduces the number of board members from 9 to 7. This bill will save the state nearly \$800,000 a biennium and is supported by a broad range of stakeholders, including interests representing cities, counties and the environmental & business communities.
- The House amendment protects the existing requirements for the board to consist of a former elected official.

E2SSB 6248: Regarding the use of bisphenol A. (a.k.a. The Safe Baby Bottle Act).

POSITION: *CONCUR*

- This bill was improved by the House to restore the original ban on BPA in sports bottles with clarifying language and a phase out date that is one year later than baby bottles. The bill passed out of the House 96-1.
- It's important to retain sports bottles in the bill because they are used by children and pregnant women. A 2009 Harvard study found that drinking from a polycarbonate water bottle for one week raised BPA levels by an average of 69%. The Departments of Ecology and Health support banning BPA in sports water bottles because there are safer alternatives that are already being widely implemented by responsible manufacturers.



E2SSB 6267: Regarding water right processing improvements.

POSITION: *SUPPORT*

- The Department of Ecology's work to process water applications is 98% dependent on the General Fund. Budget cuts have decreased staff and resources and increased the backlog of water applications, which frustrates applicants and slows work through the Trust Water Rights Program. Currently, the law allows Ecology to collect minimal fees (e.g., \$50 for examination of an application), but in reality, processing applications costs thousands of dollars.
- This bill increases application fees and generates revenue to reduce the program's reliance on the General Fund. The bill also provides two mechanisms to accelerate application processing and reduce the backlog.

ESSB 6774: Concerning transportation benefit districts.

POSITION: *CONCUR*

- Transit Agencies across the state are facing drastic service cuts due to steep decline in revenues. The House amendment will provide temporary authority for Pierce Transit and Community Transit (in Snohomish County) to create a transportation benefit district so they could avoid making drastic service cuts of 57% and 15% respectfully.
- From an economic development and environmental perspective we need to expand transit service long term, not slash it. This amendment will provide temporary relief to stave off devastating cuts.

Contributing Organizations

American Rivers ▪ Audubon Washington ▪ Cascade Bicycle Club ▪ Climate Solutions ▪ Conservation Northwest ▪ Earth Ministry Environment Washington Fuse ▪ Futurewise ▪ Heart of America Northwest ▪ The Lands Council ▪ League of Women Voters of Washington ▪ Lutheran Public Policy Office ▪ National Wildlife Federation ▪ Nature Conservancy ▪ NW Energy Coalition ▪ People for Puget Sound ▪ Sierra Club Cascade Chapter ▪ Surfrider Foundation ▪ Transportation Choices Coalition ▪ Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation Washington Conservation Voters ▪ Washington Environmental Council ▪ WashPIRG ▪ Washington Toxics Coalition ▪ Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition