

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6045

As Passed Senate, February 5, 2014

Title: An act relating to promoting economic development through enhancing transparency and predictability of state agency permitting and review processes.

Brief Description: Promoting economic development through enhancing transparency and predictability of state agency permitting and review processes.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Chase, Rivers, Schoesler, Bailey, Angel, Becker, Honeyford and Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Trade & Economic Development: 1/28/14 [DP].
Passed Senate: 2/05/14, 43-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Braun, Chair; Angel, Vice Chair; Chase, Ranking Member; Holmquist Newbry, Lias and Pedersen.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The State Auditor's Office (SAO) conducts state government audits, local government audits, and performance audits. On September 6, 2012, SAO released the performance audit Regulatory Reform: Communicating Regulatory Information and Streamlining Business Rules. The audit included an inventory of business regulations, a review of website access to business information, and a survey of how regulatory agencies streamline their existing business rules. The report makes several recommendations regarding access to regulatory information and rule streamlining, including a recommendation that all state regulatory agencies measure and track results of rule streamlining efforts and provide complete and accurate information for all business licenses and permits on their websites.

Summary of Bill: Certain state agencies must track and record the time it takes to make permitting decisions, including: the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Archaeology, the Department of Ecology (DOE), the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Gambling Commission, the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Labor and

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Industries (L&I), the Department of Licensing, the Liquor Control Board, the Department of Natural Resources, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Revenue, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Utilities and Transportation Commission. Agencies are encouraged to track information that will assist businesses to successfully plan their activities, make sound investment choices, reduce permitting costs, and avoid delays. At a minimum, agencies must track the time from initial submittal of an application to the time the agency determines that the application is complete; and also track the time from receipt of a complete application to the issuance of a decision approving or denying the permit.

Agencies must also provide information on their website including the types of permit assistance available, an estimate of the time required to process an application, examples of model completed applications, and checklists for ensuring a complete application. By January 31, 2015, and annually thereafter, each agency must report to the Legislature performance data on permit applications including permit processing times. Except for DOE, L&I, DOH, and DOT who must report every two years, by January 31, 2016, agencies must report every four years on the processing times for issuing permits that have increased or decreased, with an explanation of how the agency intends to use performance data to improve performance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Washington ranks fifth-worst nationally for the cost of doing business, and needs to shorten the amount of time it takes to process licenses and permits. By reforming the interactions between state agencies and businesses, Washington would be more competitive and business friendly. Delays, confusion, and uncertainty cost businesses money, but they also delay putting people to work and generating revenues that support state and local government. Not all agencies track the time it takes to process permits. The recommendations made by the State Auditor that are contained in the bill are a great step forward in increasing predictability for businesses.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Brown, prime sponsor; Michael Ennis, Assn. of WA Business; Mark Johnson, WA Retail Assn.; Steve Simmons, citizen.