
**Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness
Committee**

SSB 6340

Brief Description: Changing the membership of the Washington state forensic investigations council.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senators Regala and Kline).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Expands the Forensic Investigations Council from 12 to 14 members.

Hearing Date: 2/17/10

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The Washington State Forensic Investigations Council (Council) is a 12-member committee appointed by the Governor to oversee death investigations as part of the state's criminal justice system. The composition of the Council is drawn from nominations submitted to the Governor by organizations representing the professions required for appointment to the Council.

The Council consists of a coroner and a medical examiner that are appointed from nominations made by the Washington Association of County Officials; two members of a county legislative authority from nominations made by the Washington State Association of Counties; two members of a city legislative authority drawn from nominations made by the Association of Washington Cities; a county prosecutor who serves as ex officio county coroner and a county prosecutor from nominations made by the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; a county sheriff position and a chief of police from nominees of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; a private pathologist nominated by the Washington Association of Pathologists; and the Chief of the Washington State Patrol.

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 Council is responsible for authorizing expenditures from the Council's Death Investigations Account for the purpose of assisting local jurisdictions in the investigation of multiple deaths involving unanticipated, extraordinary, and catastrophic events, or involving multiple jurisdictions. The Council also oversees the Washington State Patrol Bureau of Forensic Laboratory Services (Bureau) and actively prepares and approves the Bureau's budget prior to submission to the Office of Financial Management.

The Bureau provides a wide range of forensic science expertise to city, county, and state law enforcement officers, assisting agencies at crime scenes, preparing evidence for trial, and providing expert testimony. The Bureau coordinates the efforts of the state's Breath Alcohol Test Program, Drug Evaluation and Classification Program, six crime laboratories, the Latent Print Laboratory, and the State Toxicology Laboratory.

Summary of Bill:

The Council is expanded to 14 members. The two additional members include the following:

- One attorney whose practice of law includes significant experience representing clients charged with criminal offenses. The Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and the Washington Defender Association must jointly submit two nominees for this position, one of whom must actively manage or have significant experience in managing a public or private criminal defense agency or association, and the other must have experience in cases involving deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) or other forensic evidence; and
- One scientist with experience in the areas of laboratory standards or quality assurance regulation and monitoring who is a faculty member at a state university, regional university, state college, or a non-profit college or university that has maintained its primary location in the State of Washington for a minimum of 25 consecutive years and has an enrollment of at least 500 students. The presidents of these colleges or universities may each forward to the Governor a nomination of a full-time member of the faculty at which the president serves for consideration as a member of the Council. The Governor is not restricted to appointing a member of the Council from those nominated by a president.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.