

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1437

As of March 18, 2009

Title: An act relating to a volunteer chaplain for the department of fish and wildlife.

Brief Description: Authorizing a volunteer chaplain for the department of fish and wildlife.

Sponsors: Representatives Dammeier, O'Brien, Pearson, Chandler, Miloscia, Haler, Armstrong, Morrell, Green, Kessler, Kristiansen and Smith.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/23/09, 96-1.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 3/18/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) employs fish and wildlife officers to enforce the statutory duties and rules of the department. DFW was changed from a limited authority law enforcement agency to a general authority law enforcement agency by the 2002 Legislature. This permits the agency to commission officers to enforce all the traffic and criminal laws of the state, much like Washington State Patrol troopers, in addition to the special enforcement powers granted to the DFW enforcement officers in the state Fish and Wildlife Code.

Various departments of the state and of local governments are authorized to use the services of volunteer law enforcement chaplains to provide emotional support and crisis intervention. Currently, law enforcement personnel of police, fire, and corrections departments, as well as medical examiners and coroners, the state patrol, and local law enforcement agencies, may use the services of a volunteer chaplain.

Summary of Bill: DFW is authorized to use the services of a volunteer chaplain.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill was brought by a former DFW enforcement officer and current chaplain with the Tacoma-Pierce County Chaplain Board. State Patrol and other law enforcement have specific authority to utilize a volunteer chaplain, so DFW would like specific authority to utilize a volunteer chaplain. DFW officers go through all the same trauma and the same things that other police officers witness and see, and it would be great for those officers to have someone to talk to about their experiences. This will give DFW officers an outlet and someone to talk to.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Dammeier, prime sponsor; Mike Neil, chaplain, Pierce County Sheriff's Department.