

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5261

As of February 4, 2009

Title: An act relating to creating an electronic statewide unified sex offender registry program.

Brief Description: Creating an electronic statewide unified sex offender registry program.

Sponsors: Senators Regala, Stevens, Hargrove and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/03/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) has developed the Sex Offender Notification and Registration system (SONAR) for implementation in Washington. SONAR is designed to be a statewide data system that will:

- allow counties and the Department of Corrections to directly input sex offender information into the database so that updated information is immediately available to counties across the state;
- allow counties to utilize the system on their website to provide public access to local sex offender information as authorized by statute; and
- provide a notification system allowing citizens to request and receive notification regarding sex offenders who move within a given proximity.

WASPC anticipates bringing most counties online by February of 2009.

Summary of Bill: When funded, WASPC must implement and operate an electronic statewide unified sex offender registry program.

Similar to other data and notification programs maintained by WASPC, no public employee or public agency may be held liable for the release of information so long as the release was without gross negligence.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26, 2009.

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.

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: This bill resulted out of recommendations from the Governor and the Legislature last year. Funding was provided to implement a statewide sex offender management data system. WASPC is currently in the process of doing that. This bill codifies the provisions in the budget proviso from last year and gives WASPC the same liability protection it has for the other systems it maintains. Thurston County was one of the first counties to implement the system. It will notify a county when an offender moves from one county to the next in order to assist both counties in better tracking the offender. The system is a good safety tool for the community and is extremely user friendly.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Don Pierce, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Dan Kimball, Thurston County Sheriff.