

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5204

As Reported By House Committee On:
Corrections

Title: An act relating to work ethic camps.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to work ethic camps.

Sponsors: Senators Hargrove, Long, Franklin, Kohl, Oke and Winsley; by request of Department of Corrections.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Corrections: 3/21/95, 3/29/95 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Blanton, Vice Chairman; Sherstad, Vice Chairman; Quall, Ranking Minority Member; Tokuda, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cole; Dickerson; Koster; Radcliff; K. Schmidt and Schoesler.

Staff: Antonio Sanchez (786-7383).

Background: The Department of Corrections currently operates a Work Ethic Camp (WEC) at McNeil Island Minimum Custody Annex. The camp has the capacity for 100 male inmates and 25 female inmates. The WEC is an incarceration option that provides inmates with an intensely structured work and learning environment. Inmates are taught work and life skills that reflect the behaviors, attitudes, skills, and work ethics that can be transferred to all areas of an offender's life when released. The camp provides discipline, structure, and learning opportunities through job experiences, basic job skills training, classroom instruction, and physical fitness. WEC inmates are required to maintain stringent grooming, behavioral, and work standards. The WEC day begins at 4:40 a.m., and ends at 10:00 p.m. The following is the inmate eligibility criteria for the WEC:

Work Ethic Camp Program Inmate Eligibility Criteria:

Sentence Length: 22-36 months
Age: 18-28 years old

Convictions: No current or prior sex offenses
Recommendations: Offender must be recommended by the sentencing judge only.

The average length of stay in prison for offenders eligible for the WEC is 16 months. The average length of stay for offenders who graduate from the WEC is six months. This difference in the length of stay for similar offenders in different programs has resulted in a savings to the state of approximately \$23 million since the beginning of the program. The WEC program has been in operation since November 1, 1993.

Summary of Amended Bill: The eligibility requirements for the WEC are modified to expand the pool of eligible candidates. The minimum qualifying sentence length is reduced from 22 to 20 months, and the upper age limit of 28 is eliminated. The exclusion of offenders with current or prior violent offenses is clarified so as not to exclude candidates for drug offenses such as manufacturing, possession, delivery, or intent to deliver controlled substances. The Department of Corrections may identify eligible candidates and, with the agreement of the sentencing judge, refer them to the WEC Program.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Bill: Language is deleted specifying that when the court sentences an offender to the WEC, the court must outline the conditions that will apply to the offender while on community custody after completion of the WEC program. The court is not required to identify which conditions, if violated, may result in the offender being returned to total confinement for the balance of the offender's sentence. The modified WEC program for shorter-term offenders is eliminated.

Placement conditions that were modified to clarify existing department policy allowing only offenders with minimum security custody levels to be placed in the WEC program are removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The changes to the WEC will allow for more inmates to participate and benefit from the program. Concern exists about a modified camp, however, because it is not enough time spent for the crime committed.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Martha Harden, Superior Court Judges Association (with concerns); Tom Rolfs and Jackie Campbell, Department of Corrections (pro); and Tom McBride Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.