

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5510

As Reported By House Committee On:

Law & Justice

Title: An act relating to crimes involving food stamps.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to food stamp crimes.

Sponsors: Senators Smith, Roach and Quigley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Law & Justice: 2/16/96, 2/21/96 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Sheahan, Chairman; Delvin, Vice Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Dellwo, Ranking Minority Member; Costa, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carrell; Chappell; Cody; Lambert; McMahan; Morris; Murray; Robertson; Smith; Sterk and Veloria.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background: The federal food stamp program provides eligible households with food coupons that may be used for the purchase of food products. In Washington, the food stamp program is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services according to the federal statute and regulations. The federal government pays for 100 percent of the services provided and 50 percent of the administrative costs incurred by the department.

Eligibility for the program is determined on the basis of the size of the household and the household's resources and income. Households that receive food coupons may use the coupons only to purchase food from retail food stores approved for participation in the food stamp program.

State law establishes criminal penalties for persons who sell food coupons and purchase or traffic in food coupons. A person who purchases or traffics in food coupons issued to another person under the food stamp program administered under state law is guilty of a class C felony if the coupon's value exceeds \$100, and is guilty of a gross misdemeanor if the coupon's value is \$100 or less.

The crime of purchasing food coupons requires that the person purchase coupons issued to another person under the state implemented food stamp program. This language could preclude prosecution of a person who purchases food coupons from an undercover police officer because the officer is not "issued" the coupons under the state program.

Summary of Bill: The crimes relating to the unlawful purchase or sale of food coupons are amended. It is illegal to purchase, acquire and sell, or traffic in food stamps as defined by the federal food stamp act.

References to food "coupons" are replaced with references to food "stamps."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: None.