

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2187

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, February 20, 1996

Title: An act relating to grants for vocational rehabilitation equipment and materials.

Brief Description: Modifying grants for vocational rehabilitation equipment and materials.

Sponsors: Representatives Casada, Ogden, Dickerson, Mason and Costa; by request of Department of Services for the Blind.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 2/14/96, 2/20/96 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Goings, Hale, Heavey, McCaslin and Winsley.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: The Department of Services for the Blind operates a joint federal-state vocational rehabilitation program to enable the blind and visually impaired to become employed. In achieving this goal, the purchase of special equipment and material is essential. Some of this equipment is computer-related and subject to the usual accelerated pace of obsolescence for such items.

To facilitate the provision of this equipment to the program participants, the department has carried the equipment on its inventory until the value of it drops below \$1,000. One thousand dollars is the statutory ceiling for the value of equipment items that may be granted to participants. This inventory practice is expensive to administer because by the time it drops below \$1,000 in value, some computer-related equipment is obsolete.

As of July 1, 1995, the Office of Financial Management has changed its inventory policy to increase to \$5,000 the unit-cost threshold for determining which fixed assets are to be capitalized.

Summary of Bill: The statutory ceiling of \$1,000 per item which may be granted to program participants is deleted. The ceiling is set by state financial policies and regulations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill allows the use of resources for more important purposes than taking inventory. The ownership of assisting devices and technologies remediates the loss of vision and is of great benefit to the newly blind because it aids their hope for the future.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Casada, prime sponsor; Shirley Smith, Dept. Services for Blind.