

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 5204

As Passed Senate, March 10, 1995

Title: An act relating to work ethic camps.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to work ethic camps.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/19/95, 2/1/95 [DP].

Ways & Means: 2/15/95, 2/16/95 [DP].

Passed Senate, 3/10/95, 45-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Fairley, Kohl, Moyer, Palmer, Prentice, Schow, Smith and Strannigan.

Staff: Andrea McNamara (786-7483)

Background: Offenders are eligible for participation in the current Work Ethic Camp program (WEC) if they meet the following three requirements: (1) their sentences range from terms of 22 to 36 months of total confinement; (2) they are between the ages of 18 and 28 years old; and (3) they have no current or prior convictions for sex offenses or violent offenses. Candidates are identified by the sentencing judge if the judge determines that the offender is eligible and likely to qualify both physically and mentally for the program.

The WEC program lasts from 120 to 180 days in length.

Summary of Bill: The eligibility requirements for the Work Ethic Camp (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.

When the court sentences an offender to the WEC, the court must specify the conditions that will apply to the offender while on community custody after completion of the WEC program. The court must also identify which conditions, if violated, may result in the offender being returned to total confinement for the balance of the offender's sentence.

A modified WEC program is created for shorter-term offenders. Offenders are eligible for the modified program if they are over the age of 18, are sentenced to a term of between 12 and 19 months of total confinement, and have no current or prior sex or violent offenses other than drug dealing. The modified WEC program lasts from 60 to 75 days. All other elements of the modified program are the same as the original WEC program, including referral procedures, conditions and requirements, and post-completion sentence conversion ratios.

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

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Offenders who are most likely to benefit from the work ethic camp are those offenders with relatively short sentences, typically non-violent first-time felons. In order to reach more of this population, the minimum sentence requirement for eligibility in the camp needs to be reduced. Due to the popularity of the camp as a sentencing option, some lesser offenders, who would not qualify under the current eligibility requirements are being given longer sentences so they are eligible to participate. The modified work ethic camp will allow the department to serve more of the offenders who are most susceptible to rehabilitation.

Testimony Against: The modified camp may not be a long enough program to impact the offenders, and may be perceived as too lenient of a sentence for the types of offenders who will qualify. It is unclear whether the modified camp will be able to offer all of the same programs as the original camp.

Testified: Jackie Campbell, Superintendent, Work Ethic Camp, McNeil Island Corrections Center (pro); Martha Harden, Superior Court Judges Association; Seth Dawson, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Bauer, Cantu, Drew, Finkbeiner, Fraser, Gaspard, Hargrove, Hochstatter, Johnson, Long, Moyer, Roach, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Strannigan, Sutherland, West and Winsley.

Staff: Linda Brownell (786-7913)

Testimony For: The Work Ethic Camp (WEC) has been very successful and the Department of Corrections is prepared to expand the program. The current program runs seven days a week. The entire focus is on developing new behaviors, getting offenders to respect themselves and others, and to develop self-discipline. Currently, offenders work

eight hours per day then go into educational programs for a few hours each evening. The modified camp would allow a greater impact for offenders with shorter sentences. The department received a federal grant to assist offenders to transition into employment, and offenders work with Employment Security to find job orders before their release.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jackie Campbell, Tom Rolfs, DOC (pro).