

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1405

As Reported By House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to charitable bingo games.

Brief Description: Authorizing joint bingo games.

Sponsors: Representatives McMorris, Robertson, Wood, Conway, Boldt and Delvin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/5/97, 2/20/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives McMorris, Chairman; Honeyford, Vice Chairman; Conway, Ranking Minority Member; Wood, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt; Clements; Cole and Hatfield.

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background: Bingo games are a type of gambling activity authorized by law and regulated by the Gambling Commission. Although it is an authorized gambling activity, it is closely controlled.

Bingo may be operated only by charitable and nonprofit organizations or by an agricultural fair. Organizations may offer bingo only three times per week at a location that may only offer bingo three times per week. Different organizations may not use the same location under this restriction.

Only members or employees of the organization may manage the game and may not manage games for any other organization unless authorized by the commission.

The game may be conducted only in the county in which the organization is located. Proceeds from the game may only benefit the organization conducting the game. Cards for the game may be sold only at the time and place of the game.

The limitations placed on the operation of legal bingo games anticipates one organization operating a game where the organization is located, offering the game only three days per week, and the proceeds generated from the game go to the operating organization.

During 1996, a task force of industry members formed by the commission conducted a study of the issues facing charitable fund raising activity in light of declining net proceeds for the sponsoring organizations. Charitable gambling activity is facing increased competition for available entertainment dollars. One recommendation of the task force was to allow organizations to join together using a satellite connection to offer participation in larger games with larger prizes. This recommendation may enhance the ability of charitable organizations operating bingo games to be competitive.

Summary of Bill: Charitable or nonprofit organizations may jointly offer bingo games where prizes are pooled, to enhance the size of the prize offered and where games are conducted during the organization's normal days of operation.

The commission may adopt rules for the operation, management and location of the games.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Charitable organizations find it very difficult to make the same money today that they have made in the past because of the competition from increased gambling activity. This bill would allow organizations to link bingo games via satellite, play one game per night, and would allow a bigger prize jackpot that would attract more players. This would help smaller organizations that conduct smaller games. They could compete better with the larger organizations and with other gambling activity.

Testimony Against: None

Testified: Greg Murray, Washington Charitable & Civic Gaming Association; Sylvia Anderson, Big Brothers & Sisters; and Bill Fritz, Washington Charitable & Nonprofit Gaming Association.