

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 2678

Brief Description: Using the internet to distribute sex offender information.

Sponsors: Representatives Wolfe and Ballasiotes.

Hearing: February 1, 2000

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONS

BACKGROUND:

Public agencies are authorized to inform the public about sex offenders and kidnaping offenders when doing so is relevant and necessary to protect the public. The extent of the public disclosure must be rationally related to the level of risk to the community, the location where the offender resides or will reside, and the needs of the community for the information to enhance their safety.

In order for local law enforcement agencies to have the information necessary to notify the public about sex offenders, the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), and the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board (ISRB) are required to assess and classify offenders being released from their respective jurisdictions as risk level I, II, or III. They are also required to issue narrative notices regarding the pending release of these offenders to local law enforcement agencies. The notices must include the risk level classification for the offender and, for level II and III offenders, the reasons for the classification.

Local law enforcement agencies must consider these risk level determinations, then assign their own risk level classifications for offenders about whom information will be released, and make a good faith effort to notify the public about the offender at least 14 days before the offender is released from confinement or, if the offender moves from another jurisdiction, as soon as possible after the agency learns of the move. When the local agency assigns a different risk level than that of the DOC, DSHS, or ISRB, the agency

must notify the appropriate department and submit reasons supporting its differing classification.

The various levels of risk and the corresponding methods of notification are as follows:

Level I (lowest risk): To law enforcement and, upon request, victims, witnesses, and individuals who live near where the offender resides.

Level II (moderate risk): Notification as described for level I and also to schools, day care centers, businesses and organizations that serve children, women, or vulnerable adults, neighbors, and community groups.

Level III (highest risk): Notification as described for levels I and II, and also to the public at large.

SUMMARY OF BILL:

Local law enforcement agencies are authorized, but not required, to use the internet to disseminate information regarding offenders classified as level II or III.

FISCAL NOTE: None.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Ninety days after adjournment of a session in which bill is passed.