

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5648

As Passed House:

April 8, 1999

Title: An act relating to providing consistency in definitions regarding businesses furnishing lodging.

Brief Description: Providing consistency in definitions regarding businesses furnishing lodging.

Sponsors: Senator Haugen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 3/24/99, 3/29/99 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/8/99, 95-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Hotels are defined as accommodations with three or more rooms for lien, property liability, and record keeping purposes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Clements, Republican Co-Chair; Conway, Democratic Co-Chair; B. Chandler, Republican Vice Chair; Wood, Democratic Vice Chair; Hurst; Lisk; McIntire and McMorris.

Staff: Douglas Ruth (786-7134).

Background:

Hotels and other lodging establishments must meet a variety of statutory requirements such as limitations on the service of alcoholic beverages, health and safety practices, record keeping, and property protection duties. Different requirements apply to different sizes of hotels and lodging establishments.

The statutory health and safety requirements apply to hotels or lodging establishments having three or more rooms. Those concerning the serving of alcoholic beverages apply to establishments with 20 or more rooms.

The statutory requirements concerning record keeping and property protection apply to hotels and lodging establishments having 15 or more guest rooms. These requirements require hotels and lodging establishments to maintain records of the arrival and departure of guests for one year, and to notify guests of the option of placing valuables in a hotel safe and the hotel's limited liability for loss or destruction of valuables not placed in the safe.

The statute releases hotels and lodging establishments from liability for loss or destruction of valuable guest property not placed in the hotel safe, or property exceeding \$1,000 in value. Hotels and lodging establishments' liability for the loss or destruction of baggage or other guest articles is limited to \$200, and \$100 for property left at a hotel or lodging establishment by a guest. Obtaining services at a hotel or lodging establishment without payment is a gross misdemeanor, and becomes a felony if the value of the services is greater than \$75. Hotels and lodging establishments may place liens on and sell guest property to pay for outstanding charges.

Summary of Bill:

The statutes concerning hotel and lodging establishments' record keeping, property liability, and liens on guest property are expanded to apply to hotels and lodging establishments having three or more rooms, instead of 15 or more rooms.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill bridges a gap in the law. As long as properties with three or more rooms, such as bed and breakfast establishments, must subject themselves to regulation, they ought to be able to receive the protection of the liability limitation portions of the law. The bill provides peace of mind to these establishments by protecting their liability. Because these businesses don't produce a huge profit margin, unlimited liability can really hurt smaller establishments. Bed and breakfast establishments enhance tourism and protect historical homes. The limited liability provisions of law apply to specific property and only to guest property.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Becky Bogard, Washington State Hotel and Motel Association; and Stephanie Johnson, Swantown Inn Bed and Breakfast.