

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6629

As Reported by House Committee On:
Juvenile Justice & Family Law

Title: An act relating to a family law handbook.

Brief Description: Requiring the administrator for the courts to create a family law handbook.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Sheahan, T. Sheldon, Jacobsen, Oke, Hargrove, Swecker, Rasmussen, Honeyford, Shin and Winsley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Juvenile Justice & Family Law: 2/26/02, 2/28/02 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Office of the Administrator of the Courts to create a family law handbook to be distributed by county auditors when a person files a marriage certificate.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE & FAMILY LAW

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Dickerson, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Carrell, Eickmeyer and Tokuda.

Staff: Trudes Hutcheson (786-7384).

Background:

The Office of the Administrator of the Courts (OAC) was created in 1957 by the Legislature and operates under the direction of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The OAC has a number of duties, including providing professional and technical support to all the state's courts, and providing coordination, support and oversight of the funding for a variety of judicial-related programs. In addition, the OAC publishes court forms and reference materials, such as brochures and manuals relating to Washington courts.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature declares that strong marital relationships result in stronger families, children, and communities, and place less of a fiscal burden on the state. The Legislature also declares that the state has a compelling interest to provide couples applying for a marriage license with information regarding marriage and the effects of divorce.

The OAC must develop a family law handbook that contains information on:

- prenuptial agreements;
- shared parental responsibility for children, including establishing a residential schedule for the child in the event of divorce;
- information on notice requirements and standards for parental relocation;
- information on child support;
- property rights;
- spousal maintenance;
- domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect;
- court process for dissolution;
- effects of dissolution on children; and
- community resources that are available to separating or divorcing persons.

The handbook is given by the county auditor to persons filing marriage certificates.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Knowledge is power and this bill would provide couples with knowledge to help them understand the laws of marriage and divorce. A family law handbook will also help teach couples about the effects of divorce on children and on the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Larry Kramme, independent volunteer.