

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6779

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to a military facilities task force.

Brief Description: Creating the military facilities task force.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, B. Sheldon, Oke, Swecker, Rasmussen, Shin, Gardner, Roach, Hale and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/28/02, 3/1/02 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Requires the Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs to conduct a Washington military facilities study to provide recommendations to the Governor and the state Legislature regarding actions needed to avoid the closing of military bases in Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Romero, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; McMorris, Ranking Minority Member; McDermott, Schindler, Schmidt and Upthegrove.

Staff: Kimberly Berry (786-7291).

Background:

The federal National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2002 requires that a fifth round of military base closings begin in March 2005. There have been four rounds of military base closings since 1988 with 451 installations closed to date. There are seven major military bases located in Washington.

The Base Closure Process:

By February 2004 the Secretary of Defense (secretary) must determine the number and type of military facilities needed to support the force-structure plan required to meet the threats to national security over the next 20 years. The base closing process will proceed only if the secretary certifies that additional closures are warranted. If base closures are desired, the President will appoint a nine-member Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (commission) to convene in March 2005 to vote on the list of base closures provided by the secretary. The commission will submit a final list of military bases to be closed or scaled back, to the President by September 2005. The President and Congress each have to accept or reject the list as is.

As in previous base closure rounds, military value continues to be the primary criteria used to select military facilities for closure. However, for the 2005 base closure round, Congress has changed the definition of military value. The new definition emphasizes preserving military facilities as staging areas for homeland defense missions, as well as guaranteeing the present and future availability of sufficient air, ground, and sea training areas that are diverse in climate and terrain. Other criteria will be considered, such as the economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of the military facility.

In a change from previous rounds, the privatization and economic redevelopment of a base selected for closure may only occur if the commission recommends privatization as a method of closure for that specific facility.

Privatization of Military Base Support Services:

Military base infrastructure costs are being reduced through the Department of Defense programs that outsource and privatize base support services and activities. Examples include the military housing privatization initiative, and the privatization of the on-base portion of military utility systems.

In Washington there is no formal governmental structure to facilitate the combined efforts of the Governor, the Legislature, local governments, private industry and the United States military to avert the closure of military facilities located in the state.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs (joint committee) is tasked to conduct a Washington military facilities study to provide recommendations to the Governor and the state Legislature regarding actions needed to avoid the closing of military bases in Washington. Task force recommendations may include:

- Expenditures appropriate to ensure continued operation of military facilities within the state;
- Changes to state laws, local ordinances, zoning requirements, or any other regulations

that would encourage the continued operation of military facilities within the state;
and

- Actions to take at the federal level in support of military facilities within the state.

In conducting the military facilities study, the joint committee will consult with representatives and nonelected community leaders of each county and city containing a major military facility and any other experts the joint committee deems appropriate. The military authorities of each military base in the state will also be invited to participate.

The joint committee begins work on the military facilities study immediately after the completion of the legislative session and continues until the consensus of committee membership is to conclude.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs is tasked to conduct a Washington military facilities study instead of creating a task force to conduct the study. Facilitating the privatization of base infrastructure is deleted as the primary goal, and examining outsourcing and privatizing military base infrastructure support activities is an added item to the study. Punctuation and paragraph numbering corrections are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill is needed in order to facilitate a statewide effort to prevent base closures from occurring in Washington. The economic impact of a base closure on some communities, such as Oak Harbor, would be devastating.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor.