

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6663

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, January 29, 2002

Title: An act relating to vehicle impoundment.

Brief Description: Revising notification provisions for vehicle impoundments.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Haugen, Shin, Kohl-Welles, Stevens, McDonald, Parlette, Prentice, Jacobsen, Honeyford and Gardner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/24/02, 1/29/02 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Benton, Eide, Johnson, McAuliffe, McDonald, Prentice and Shin.

Staff: Dean Carlson (786-7305)

Background: Under current law, when an unauthorized vehicle is impounded, the impounding tow operator must send notification to the legal and registered owners of the impoundment, as well as the owners of any other items of personal property registered or titled with the Department of Licensing, within 24 hours. The notice is to contain the information on the persons authorizing the impound; the name address and telephone number of the tow operator; the location and time of the impound; and a written notice of the right of redemption and opportunity for a hearing to contest the impound.

Summary of Bill: When a vehicle is impounded, the impounding tow operator must notify the legal and registered owner by telephone and first-class mail within 24 hours of the impoundment. The owners of any other items of personal property registered or titled with the Department of Licensing involved in the impound must be notified by first class-mail within 24 hours.

The tow operator must make a reasonable effort using all publicly available resources or information provided by law enforcement to get the home telephone numbers of the legal and registered owner. If the registered or legal owner's home telephone number is unpublished or otherwise unavailable through public means, the tow operator is considered to have met the intent of the law.

The telephone notification must include: the name, address, and telephone number of the impounding tow operator; the location and time of the impoundment; under whose authority the vehicle was impounded; and the impoundment costs and storage fees.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: A phone call would notify the owner of the vehicle much sooner than a letter when their vehicle is impounded. It makes sense to make the call while you are looking up the address.

Testimony Against: It is not clear what constitutes a reasonable effort. It would be difficult to find the right person when you are dealing with a common name.

Testified: Senator Roach, prime sponsor (pro); Stu Halsan, Washington Tow Truck Association (con); Jerry Goddard, Independent Towers of Washington (con).