

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2323

As Reported By House Committee On:
Law & Justice

Title: An act relating to law enforcement training.

Brief Description: Providing for future law enforcement officers training.

Sponsors: Representatives Sterk, Chappell, Thompson, Dellwo, Buck, Hymes, Talcott, Cooke and McMahan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Law & Justice: 1/24/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Sheahan, Chairman; Delvin, Vice Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Dellwo, Ranking Minority Member; Costa, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Carrell; Chappell; Cody; Lambert; McMahan; Morris; Murray; Robertson; Smith; Sterk and Veloria.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background: The Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission provides training and education programs for law enforcement personnel, including commissioned officers, corrections officers, fire marshals, and prosecuting attorneys. The commission is funded by appropriations from the public safety and education account, and its annual budget is approximately \$5.5 million.

Basic law enforcement officer training is generally required of all full-time commissioned law enforcement employees of the state. The training consists of a 440-hour program covering a wide variety of subjects, including constitutional and criminal law and procedures, criminal investigation, firearms training, and communication and writing skills. The law enforcement training is available only to persons employed as commissioned law enforcement officers and must be commenced within the first six months of employment as a law enforcement officer.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) oversees higher education policies and practices in the state. The board provides planning, coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis services with respect to the state's higher education goals, priorities, and needs. The board also administers state scholarship and grant programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A future law enforcement officers training program is created to provide basic law enforcement training to law enforcement trainees. "Law enforcement trainee" is defined as any person in his or her junior or senior year who is progressing toward a baccalaureate degree in criminal justice or a related field. The training program is to be operated by the Criminal Justice Training Commission according to rules adopted by the commission. The program must accept 30 full-time trainees into the program in 1996 and up to an additional 30 trainees in 1997. The trainees must pay for the full cost of the basic law enforcement training, including supplies, materials, and room and board.

A future law enforcement officers conditional scholarship program is established, to be administered by HECB. The scholarship program is to be funded from state appropriations and private donations. Conditional scholarships may be awarded to a student registered for criminal justice training through the future law enforcement officers training program. The scholarships will be forgiven if the recipient becomes a full-time commissioned law enforcement officer in any jurisdiction of the state. The board has the responsibility of selecting students to receive the conditional scholarships, collecting and managing repayments from students who do not meet their law enforcement obligations, and soliciting public and private grants for the program.

The board must establish a planning committee to develop criteria for the screening and selection of recipients of conditional scholarships. The selection criteria shall include consideration of scholastic achievement, leadership ability, and contributions to the community.

A student who is awarded a conditional scholarship must repay the scholarship with interest if the student does not serve as a full-time commissioned law enforcement officer for four years. The repayment period of four years begins six months after the student completes the program or discontinues the course of study. For each payment period in which the recipient is employed as a law enforcement officer, the principal and interest payment for that period shall be forgiven, until the entire obligation is satisfied or the participant ceases to serve as a law enforcement officer.

The board is responsible for the collection of repayments and shall exercise all remedies available under law in pursuing collection. The board must develop appropriate criteria for the deferment of repayment obligations. The board must use all receipts from the payment of principal or interest paid on behalf of participants to

cover the costs of the conditional scholarship program, the maintenance of records, and the costs of collection services.

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs is directed to assemble a study group to evaluate and make recommendations to the Legislature, by January 1, 1997, regarding the mission, duties, and administration of the Criminal Justice Training Commission. The study group is to be comprised of 22 members representing law enforcement agencies, the Washington State Patrol, local jurisdictions, colleges and universities, and the Legislature.

The study group's responsibilities include (1) evaluating the desirability and feasibility of providing law enforcement training to pre-employed law enforcement officer applicants; (2) reviewing the adequacy of the basic law enforcement training program; (3) evaluating the status of supervisory, management, and advanced training programs; and (4) making recommendations regarding sources of funding.

If specific funding for the study group is not provided by June 30, 1996, the section establishing the study group is null and void.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill deletes the requirement that the HECB use entities approved by the Washington student loan guaranty association for the collection of repayments, and specifies that the HECB must adopt appropriate criteria for the deferment of repayment obligations. The substitute bill limits the training program and scholarship grant program to students in their junior or senior years. The substitute bill allows the student to work as a commissioned law enforcement officer in any jurisdiction of the state, not just local jurisdictions. The substitute bill adds two members of the Washington State Patrol to the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs study group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. If specific funding for the study group is not provided by June 30, 1996, the section establishing the study group is null and void.

Testimony For: Currently, only those persons who have already been hired as law enforcement officers may receive law enforcement officer training, and the training is paid by the law enforcement agency. This system is expensive and inefficient because a high percentage of officers will drop out or will leave and go to work for another law enforcement agency. This makes it difficult for small jurisdictions to compete. Other states have implemented similar programs and found that they are cost-effective and successful. The study group is needed as soon as possible because the training

commission is the lifeline of law enforcement agencies. The training program needs to be reevaluated because it has not kept pace with today's criminal justice needs.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Pro) Representative Sterk, prime sponsor; Randy Hamilton, Chehalis Police and Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Rob Alderson, Spokane Police Guild; Mike Patrick, Washington State Council of Police Officers; Susan Patrick, Higher Education Coordinating Board; John Wabel, Crown College; and Bill Wiester, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.