

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 5139

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As Passed Senate, February 2, 1996

**Title:** An act relating to persons who patronize prostitutes.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing law enforcement officers to impound the vehicles of persons who are patronizing prostitutes.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl, Smith, Long, Prentice, Winsley, Heavey, Prince, Franklin, Schow, West, Oke and Rasmussen).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Law & Justice: 1/24/95, 2/1/95 [DPS]; 1/9/96 [DP].  
Passed Senate, 2/22/95, 44-3; 2/2/96, 35-13.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Smith, Chair; Fairley, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Johnson, Long, McCaslin, Quigley, Roach and Schow.

**Staff:** Martin Lovinger (786-7443)

**Background:** It is felt that most law enforcement efforts aimed at preventing prostitution are directed at punishing prostitutes. However, the economic basis for prostitution lies in the demand for sexual services, often from persons who use motor vehicles in order to solicit and obtain those services.

The use of motor vehicles in patronizing prostitutes contributes to safety and other concerns in residential neighborhoods. It also negatively impacts commercial areas.

**Summary of Bill:** A law enforcement officer who arrests and takes into custody a person for patronizing a prostitute or patronizing a juvenile prostitute may impound the vehicle if the vehicle is owned by the person arrested and was used in committing the crime.

Impoundments must be performed in accordance with current state towing and impoundment laws.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** This bill addresses some serious traffic and safety concerns of residents and businesses in areas where prostitution is a problem. Prostitution is a blight on neighborhoods

and impoundment of vehicles of those who patronize prostitutes is a helpful tool. Motor vehicles contribute to the prostitution problem. Impoundment has been shown to be a good strategy to interdict this problem by a similar law in Portland.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Kohl, original prime sponsor.