

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 6556

As Passed Senate, February 9, 1996

Title: An act relating to public electronic access to government records and information.

Brief Description: Enhancing public electronic access to government information.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senator Sutherland).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Telecommunications & Utilities: 1/22/96, 1/25/96 [DPS].
Ways & Means: 2/5/96, 2/6/96 [DP2S].
Passed Senate, 2/9/96, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6556 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, Hochstatter and Owen.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 6556 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Bauer, Cantu, Drew, Finkbeiner, Fraser, Hargrove, Hochstatter, Johnson, Kohl, Long, McDonald, Moyer, Pelz, Quigley, Roach, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Strannigan, Sutherland, West, Winsley and Wojahn.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: With the expansion of "telematics" (the use of computers and telecommunications together), more information is available to citizens in a way that is comparatively quicker to retrieve than non-electronic methods. This applies to government information as well, and many state agencies and political subdivisions of the state have made a range of information available in various electronic formats.

In response to varying degrees of electronic accessibility among state agencies and political subdivisions, including a lack of standards for acceptable classifications of government information, the Legislature addressed this topic in 1994 by creating the Public Information Access Policy Task Force. The task force released its findings and recommendations in December, 1995.

Summary of Bill: Within existing resources and planning activities, state agencies are directed generally to plan for and implement processes for making information available electronically, with an emphasis on current information, public demand, two-way interaction, overcoming various barriers to information, maintaining accuracy, and protecting privacy. The Legislature and the court system are separately given directives pertaining to electronic information access similar to those given to state agencies. Agencies are directed to coordinate with state institutions of higher education in educating employees in the use and implementation of technology.

Guidelines are provided for state agencies when planning and implementing two-way interaction and delivery technologies.

The Information Services Board is directed to establish statewide technical standards and to require state agencies to consider electronic public access when obtaining or upgrading information systems.

The state Library Commission is given the responsibility to promote and facilitate electronic access to public information and services and to establish content-related standards and common formats for state agency produced information.

In its state strategic information technology plan, the Department of Information Services is directed to include goals for electronic access to government information and services, and includes an assessment of goals and progress in this area in its biennial state performance report on information technology.

Within its strategic information technology plan, each state agency is directed to develop goals and an implementation strategy to provide electronic access to public information and services.

The State Library, with the assistance of the Department of Information Services and the State Archives, is directed to cooperatively design and implement a pilot government information locator system to enable easy public access to government information in an electronic format.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately, except section 5 of the act takes effect June 30, 1997.

Testimony For: This bill reflects the recommendations of the task force. It is a good effort in setting policies to facilitate citizen access to government.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Nancy Zussy, State Librarian (pro); Sam Hunt, DIS (pro); Rowland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers (pro).

House Amendment(s): Language is added to clarify that state agencies and local governments are encouraged to also plan for electronic access technologies in addition to two-way interaction technologies.