

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6231

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As Passed Senate, February 3, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to exempting certain private air ambulance services from licensing under the insurance code.

**Brief Description:** Exempting certain private air ambulance services from licensing under the insurance code.

**Sponsors:** Senator Spanel; by request of Insurance Commissioner.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Financial Institutions, Housing & Consumer Protection: 1/12/06, 1/17/06[DP].

Passed Senate: 2/3/06, 47-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, HOUSING & CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Benton, Ranking Minority Member; Benson, Brandland, Franklin, Keiser, Schmidt and Spanel.

**Staff:** Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

**Background:** Legislation passed in 2005 (ESSB 5736) required the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) to provide a feasibility study to the Legislature regarding subscription air ambulance services. Air ambulances have been controversial for various reasons, including the issue of whether they should be regulated as "insurers," or whether there may be some alternate method of providing consumer protection for subscribers of air ambulance services. This bill is the result of the OIC's research and recommendations.

**Summary of Bill:** Private air ambulance services that solicit and accept membership subscriptions, charge fees and provide services are not considered to be insurers under Washington State statutes, if they meet licensure and aeromedical transport services criteria, have been in operation in Washington for a minimum of two years, and submit evidence of compliance to the OIC

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** This bill is the result of an extensive, consultive process and will protect consumers, while allowing for air evacuation services to citizens in rural areas. Air evacuation is medically-indicated in some cases, and should be maintained as a patient option.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Senator Spanel, prime sponsor; Mary Clogston, OIC; John Evans, former San Juan County Commissioner and citizen; Garth Eimers, EMS; Randy Gaylord, San Juan County Prosecutor/Coroner; Vicki Kirkpatrick, WA St Assn of Counties; Nancy Vorhees, Inland NW Health Svcs.