

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6747

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 2, 2006

Title: An act relating to comprehensive safe school plans.

Brief Description: Regarding comprehensive safe school plans.

Sponsors: Senators Rockefeller, Roach, Pridemore, Pflug, Thibaudeau, Regala, Doumit, Fraser, McAuliffe and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/1/06, 2/2/06 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6747 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Carrell, Delvin, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller and Shin.

Staff: Stephanie Yurcisin (786-7438)

Background: Under current law, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must establish timelines for school districts to develop individual comprehensive safe school plans. School districts are required to report progress on their comprehensive safe school plans to the SPI on a periodic but undefined basis. The SPI is given authority to adopt rules for implementation.

During the 2001-03 biennium, funding was provided in the budget to create a School Safety Center within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Among other tasks, the School Safety Center was responsible for, among other things, disseminating successful models of school safety plans, providing assistance to schools in establishing comprehensive safe school plans, acting as a resource center, coordinating activities relating to school safety, and developing and maintaining a school safety information web site. The budget proviso also called for an Advisory Committee to be created within the School Safety Center that is responsible for developing a training program employing best practices for school safety personnel. Funding was renewed for the School Safety Center during the 2003-05 and the 2005-07 biennia.

In 2003, the Legislature provided initial funding through the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to map and assess the security of high schools in Washington. Mapping for approximately 460 high schools has been completed, and the next group of approximately 425 middle and elementary schools is anticipated to be mapped by April 2006. After that group, there will be approximately 800 schools remaining to be mapped.

Summary of Substitute Bill: If funding is provided, all schools must have comprehensive safe school plans in place by the beginning of the 2008-09 school year. The schools that have been "mapped" must include that information in their safe school plan by the beginning of the 2008-09 school year. If funding is not provided, the Superintendent of Public Instruction must adopt rules regarding timelines for the development and review of comprehensive safe school plans consistent with the availability of resources. Schools are also required to annually update, review, and report on their comprehensive safe school plan.

If funding is provided, staff in each school must receive information and training about the school's comprehensive safe school plan, beginning with the 2007-08 school year and continuing on an annual basis.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to adopt rules for implementation by the beginning of the 2007-08 school year which must include provisions for various practice drills and exercises.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction will consult with the Washington State School Safety Center Advisory Committee and provide, by the beginning of the 2007-08 school year, guidance to school districts about the development of school-based comprehensive safe school plans.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill makes a technical correction to include the proper name for the School Safety Center Advisory Committee and includes a provision to ensure that school districts coordinate their safe school plans and staff information and training with local emergency response officials.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2006.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: This legislation was originally introduced early in 2001. Since September 11, 2001, we have had many examples of just how catastrophic certain disasters can be. Updating our response plans is very necessary. This bill directly connects funding to the development of safe school plans, which is very important. This is the next step in the issue of preparedness. Having a standard for when the plans must be in place is very important. The new nature of security requires schools to have to adapt to more complicated crises and the increasingly complex nature of these new challenges. The mapping process includes coordination between local emergency response and the schools.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Phil Rockefeller, prime sponsor; Barbara Mertens, WASA; Joe Pope, Association of Washington School Principals/School Safety Center Advisory Committee; Craig Apperson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.