

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2951

As Reported by House Committee On:
Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs

Title: An act relating to increasing services to report and investigate missing Native American women.

Brief Description: Ordering a study to determine how to increase reporting and investigation of missing Native American women.

Sponsors: Representatives McCabe, Gregerson, Stambaugh, Stanford, Walsh, Reeves, Dye, Barkis, Frame, Haler, Jinkins, Kloba, Ormsby, Valdez and Peterson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 1/30/18, 2/1/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington State Patrol to study and report to the Legislature on ways to increase resources for reporting and identifying missing Native American women.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; McCabe, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jenkin, Reeves and Sawyer.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

The Washington State Patrol (State Patrol) Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit provides services for reporting and investigating missing persons. Such services include a 24-hour telephone service for reporting missing persons, poster distribution and research assistance to

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local law enforcement and family members, and coordinating investigative resources with state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies.

A recent federal Department of Justice report found that four out of five Native American women have experienced violence in their lives. The Canadian government recently initiated a national Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to report on the causes and high rates for violence towards indigenous women and girls.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The State Patrol is required to conduct a study to increase state resources for reporting and identifying missing Native American women in the state. The State Patrol and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs must convene meetings with tribal law enforcement partners and work with federally recognized tribes in a government-to-government relationship to explore ways of creating partnerships. The State Patrol also must work with the federal Department of Justice to increase information sharing and coordinate resources.

The State Patrol must report to the Legislature by June 1, 2019, on the results of the study. The study must include: data on the number of missing Native American women in the state; any barriers to providing more state resources to the issue; and any recommendations, including proposed legislation to address the problem.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill extends the reporting deadline from December 1, 2018, to June 1, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) No one knows how many native women are murdered or missing. There are no national databases to track these individuals and sometimes it is difficult to get help. This crisis has been a long-standing issue in Native American communities. Tribes cannot solve this problem alone. The Yakama Nation has recognized awareness of missing and murdered Native American women and has called on other local, state, and national assistance.

Families of missing Native American women need more information to increase response efforts. Families spend years worrying when members are missing, which creates anxiety over not knowing what happened to a loved one who disappeared. It is hard for family

members to access resources outside of local advocacy groups. The critical time to get law enforcement involved is at the beginning of an investigation.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative McCabe, prime sponsor; Monica Alexander, Washington State Patrol; Carolyn Deford, Puyallup Tribe; Kayla Crocker; Yasmina Bearchild; and Dawn Vyvyan, Yakama Nation Sauk-Suiattle Tribe.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.