

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2818

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections, February 23, 2018

Title: An act relating to the appointment of religious coordinators.

Brief Description: Concerning the appointment of religious coordinators.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Govt, Elections & IT (originally sponsored by Representatives Frame, Irwin, Chapman, Senn, Sells, Sawyer, Appleton, Fitzgibbon, Macri and Stanford).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/13/18, 66-32.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/21/18, 2/23/18 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the employee title chaplain to religious coordinator at Department of Corrections (DOC) institutions.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Miloscia, Ranking Member; Saldaña and Zeiger.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: DOC appoints chaplains for its correctional institutions to meet the religious needs of inmates. Chaplains serve as religious program coordinators for all faith groups. Every chaplain must have qualifications consistent with community standards of the faith group to which the chaplain belongs. The Department of Social and Health Services also appoints chaplains for its juvenile, custodial, correctional, and mental institutions. Chaplains are not required to carry personal liability insurance, and may request that the attorney general provide legal defense in any action arising out of the chaplain's official duties.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A minister or other clergyperson employed as a chaplain in a state institution or agency may receive, in addition to his or her gross salary, a housing allowance as follows:

- the rental value of a home furnished to the person; or
- a housing allowance paid to the person as part of his or her compensation, in an amount equal to the rent or expense of the home, but not more than 40 percent of the person's gross salary.

Summary of Bill: The employee title chaplain is changed to religious coordinator for DOC institutions. The housing allowance for chaplains is expanded to cover DOC religious coordinators.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: For incarcerated Native American citizens, religious practices have been the best way to meet penological goals. This will increase access to religious programs by using neutral language ensuring that all faith practices will be honored. The bill will help efforts to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Winona Stevens, Huy.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.