

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5672

As Reported by House Committee On:
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to the Washington auto theft prevention authority account.

Brief Description: Concerning the Washington auto theft prevention authority account.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, L., Rolfes, Conway, Dozier, Gildon, Kuderer and Nobles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 3/16/23, 3/22/23 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended By Committee)

- Removes state confinement costs as an allowable use of Washington Auto Theft Prevention Account funds.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Chopp, Connors, Couture, Davis, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Steele, Stonier and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Chandler and Harris.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

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

Background:

The Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority (WATPA) was established within the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to review and make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor regarding motor vehicle theft crimes in Washington.

Washington Auto Theft Prevention Account.

The Washington Auto Theft Prevention Account (Account) is an appropriated account created in the custody of the State Treasurer. All receipts from gifts, grants, bequests, devises, or other funds from public and private sources (specifically traffic infraction surcharges) to support its activities must be deposited into the Account. Expenditures from the Account may be used only for activities relating to motor vehicle theft, including education, prevention, law enforcement, investigation, prosecution, and confinement costs.

The WATPA must allocate moneys in the Account to public agencies for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, and supporting programs that are designed to prevent motor vehicle theft, including providing financial support:

- to prosecution agencies to increase the effectiveness of motor vehicle theft prosecution;
- to a unit of local government or a team consisting of units of local governments to increase the effectiveness of motor vehicle theft enforcement;
- for the procurement of equipment and technologies for use by law enforcement agencies to enforce motor vehicle theft laws; and
- for programs that are designed to educate and assist the public in the prevention of motor vehicle theft.

Traffic Infractions.

In addition to any other penalties imposed by law, a person found to have committed a traffic infraction must be assessed a \$10 surcharge per infraction. Revenue from this fee must be remitted to the State Treasurer for deposit into the Account. Traffic surcharges are the primary source of revenue for the WATPA.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The provision that authorizes the WATPA to allocate money in the Account for state adult and juvenile confinement costs is eliminated. However, funds in the Account may continue to be used for municipal and county incarceration costs.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The striking amendment eliminates the new provisions that were added that: (1) required the Office of the State Treasurer to annually deposit \$7 million of insurance premium tax

revenue into the Account; and (2) ceased the deposit of revenue from traffic infraction surcharges from being deposited in the Account.

In addition, the striking amendment: (1) removes state confinement costs as an allowable use of Account funds; (2) makes a technical amendment; and (3) adds a null and void clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Today, Washington is ranked third in the nation in terms of cars being stolen. There are some types of cars that insurance companies will not cover because of the number that are stolen on a regular basis. During the month of January 2023, there were 1,600 cars stolen in King County, and another 909 cars were stolen in Pierce County.

Auto theft in Washington has increased while resources to combat auto theft have decreased. In the original budget, after the Auto Theft Prevention Account (Account) was created, the Account generated about \$12 million per biennium. Currently, the balance in the Account is very low because traffic infractions are down. Today, fewer tickets are being issued and there are fewer police on the ground to issue those infractions. This bill will not only provide a more appropriate, stable, funding source but also a more appropriate nexus between insurance premiums and auto theft.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Lynda Wilson, prime sponsor; and James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.