

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2020

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government & Elections, February 20, 2024

Title: An act relating to creating a state administered public infrastructure assistance program within the emergency management division.

Brief Description: Creating a state administered public infrastructure assistance program within the emergency management division.

Sponsors: House Committee on Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans (originally sponsored by Representatives Timmons, Abbarno, Leavitt, Ryu, Ramel, Reed, Ormsby, Rule, Donaghy, Doglio, Cheney, Reeves, Wylie, Paul and Shavers; by request of Military Department).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/9/24, 97-0.

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 2/16/24, 2/20/24 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the adjutant general to administer a state infrastructure assistance program for emergency assistance to counties and federally recognized tribes within the state that experience public infrastructure damage due to a disaster.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier, Fortunato, Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: The Military Department, under the direction of the state's adjutant general,

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is responsible for administering a comprehensive emergency management program for the state to ensure adequate preparation for disasters, administration of state and federal programs providing disaster relief to individuals, and further ensure adequate support for search and rescue operations. Each political subdivision of the state must establish or jointly create a local organization for carrying out emergency management functions in accordance with the Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

The adjutant general is required to administer a state program for emergency assistance to individuals who are victims of a natural, technological, or human-caused disaster. The emergency assistance program may include grants, loans, gifts of services, equipment, supplies, or funds to individuals who need assistance and who meet certain eligibility standards.

Summary of Bill: The adjutant general is authorized to administer a program for emergency assistance to county governments and federally recognized tribal governments that experience or respond to public infrastructure damage due to a natural, technological, or human-caused disaster. The Military Department may initiate rule making to address the distribution of funds from county governments to recipients within the county. "Public infrastructure assistance" is defined to mean supplementary state assistance provided to county governments and federally recognized tribal governments when authorized under an emergency proclamation of the Governor for the cost of disaster-related public property debris removal, emergency protective measures to protect life and property, and permanent repair work to damaged or destroyed public infrastructure.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: In the situation of smaller rural communities, they had public infrastructure that was really damaged due to flooding and we qualified for FEMA assistance, but in the event that we don't, I believe the state should step up and help communities rebuild. We would be joining a handful of states that have a public infrastructure program in place to help communities that experience disasters. This bill is needed because of the numerous incidents and disasters in our state that do not rise to the level of a federal disaster declaration. For every one disaster that qualifies for federal assistance in this state, we have about ten that do not. This leaves communities that have experienced severe damage with no way of meeting the needs that arise due to this.

This bill is limited to when the governor declares an emergency and is designed to be supplementary assistance only to bridge the gap between what the local governments can do

and what the federal government can provide.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Joe Timmons, Prime Sponsor; Robert Ezelle, Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division.

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