

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5261

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Education
Capital Facilities & Financing*

Title: An act relating to school construction standards for fire prevention and safety.

Brief Description: Requiring new schools to have automatic fire equipment.

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Bailey, Vognild, McMullen, Newhouse, Madsen, Oke, Rinehart and Conner).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, April 3, 1991, DP.
Capital Facilities & Financing, April 5, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 17 members: Representatives Peery, Chair; G. Fisher, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Betrozoff; Broback; Cole; Dorn; Holland; P. Johnson; Jones; Neher; Orr; Phillips; Rasmussen; Roland; and Valle.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: During the past decade, fires have caused more than \$10 million worth of damage to public school facilities in the state. Currently, the State Building Code requires that schools have sprinkler systems only in enclosed spaces below stairways and in basements larger than 1,500 square feet. In addition, four counties, King, Kitsap, Thurston and Clark, require sprinklers in all buildings larger than a specified size of 10,000 to 12,000 square feet.

Summary of Bill: School buildings constructed after July 1, 1992, must be equipped with an automatic fire-extinguishing system. The requirement does not apply to school buildings used by less than 50 people for less than 12 hours per week or four hours in any one day. The requirement also does not apply if the building's construction permit was applied for before the effective date of this act.

Fiscal Note: Requested March 20, 1991.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 1992.

Testimony For: Sprinklers in school buildings are a good investment, and will reduce property losses and the disruption created when schools are closed because of fires.

Testimony Against: While we support the concept of sprinklers in schools, the adoption of codes should be done by the Building Code Council, not the director of fire protection. A blanket requirement that all schools have sprinklers will create implementation problems, especially in alternative learning programs, such as classes held in business offices or malls.

Witnesses: Otto Jensen, Washington Fire Chiefs Association (in favor); Duke Schaub, Associated General Contractors (Building Code Council should adopt requirements); Mark Triplett, Seattle Master Builders (Building Code Council should adopt requirements); Gordon Walgren, Washington Fire Chiefs Association & sprinkler contractors (in favor); Blair Patrick, Washington Association of Building Officials (concerned about blanket implementation); Robert Dilger, Washington State Building Trades Council (in favor); and Dwayne Slate, Washington School Directors' Association (in favor).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
CAPITAL FACILITIES & FINANCING**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 12 members: Representatives H. Sommers, Chair; Rasmussen, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Neher, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brough; Casada; Fraser; Jacobsen; Ogden; Peery; Silver; and Wang.

Staff: Bill Robinson (786-7147).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Capital Facilities & Financing Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Education: No changes were recommended.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 1992.

Testimony For: Sprinklers in school buildings are a good investment, and will reduce property losses and the disruption created when schools are closed because of fires.

Adding fire sprinklers will increase construction costs about 1 percent, a wise investment.

Testimony Against: While we support the concept of sprinklers in schools, the adoption of codes should be done by the Building Code Council, not the director of fire protection. The bill could be amended to resolve the fire code interpretation problem and resolve jurisdiction problems.

Witnesses: Otto Jensen, Washington Fire Chiefs Association (in favor); Gordon Walgren, Washington Fire Chiefs Association (in favor); Dick Small, Director of fire protection for the Department of Community Development (in favor); Dwayne Slate, Washington School Directors' Association (in favor); and Mark Triplett, Seattle Master Builders (against).