

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSJR 8208

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Local Government*

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to permit municipalities and state agencies to employ chaplains.

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Governmental Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Newhouse, Vognild, Hayner, Gaspard, McCaslin and McMullen).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Local Government, April 5, 1991, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 15 members: Representatives Haugen, Chair; Cooper, Vice Chair; Ferguson, Ranking Minority Member; Mitchell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Edmondson; Franklin; Horn; Nealey; Nelson; Rayburn; Roland; Wood; Wynne; and Zellinsky.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: The state constitution prohibits the use of public money or property to be used for any religious worship, exercise or instruction, or the support of any religious establishment. However, these prohibitions do not forbid the Legislature from providing for the State to employ a chaplain for state custodial, correctional, and mental institutions.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature is authorized to permit counties and public hospital districts to employ chaplains at their hospitals, health facilities, and hospice.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The Legislature can permit counties to employ chaplains for such purposes.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The amendment becomes effective immediately upon certification of the election

results of the November 1991 general election, if the voters approve the amendment.

Testimony For: The auditor indicates that the constitution precludes hospital districts from employing chaplains. Chaplains can play an essential role in both the healing process and dying.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: (Pro): Greg Vigdor, Washington State Hospital Association; and Hack Yador, Pierce County Sheriffs Department.