

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1208

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE, APRIL 5, 1991

Brief Description: Authorizing an interstate forest fire suppression compact.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Belcher, Hargrove, Jones, Beck, Winsley, Nealey, R. King and Haugen; by request of Department of Corrections).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Nelson, Chairman; Thorsness, Vice Chairman; Hayner, L. Kreidler, Madsen, Newhouse, Rasmussen, and A. Smith.

Staff: Ben Barnes (786-7465)

Hearing Dates: April 4, 1991; April 5, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Washington, Oregon, and Idaho each rely on prison inmates to provide fire fighting assistance within their respective states. Some forest fires are intense enough to require fire fighting personnel beyond the home state's existing capabilities. No interstate agreement exists, however, which would allow these adjoining states to transport inmate forest fire suppression crews across state boundaries.

It is suggested that an Interstate Forest Fire Suppression Compact be adopted.

SUMMARY:

The Interstate Forest Fire Suppression Compact is enacted. The compact becomes valid when any two of the three states of Washington, Idaho and Oregon have enacted the compact into law. The compact will remain binding until any one of the three states sends written notice of their intent to withdraw from the compact.

The compact gives the Department of Corrections authority to transport offenders to the party states for fire suppression efforts, and, in emergency situations due to bad weather, road closures.

The Department of Corrections must appoint a liaison to coordinate and develop the inmate fire suppression units.

Inmates working on forest fire suppression in other states will be under the jurisdiction of the sending state, unless the inmate has escaped. If the inmate has escaped, he or she will be under the jurisdiction of both the sending state and the receiving state. Inmates suspected of a criminal offense while working in another state, will be returned to the sending state only if they are discharged from prosecution or other form of proceeding, imprisonment, or detention from the offense.

The Department of Corrections is authorized to contract with the federal government to fight fires on federal land with state inmate forest fire suppression crews. The inmate forest fire crews may be considered a Class I Correctional Industries program when fighting forest fires on federal lands.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested April 2, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR:

Enacting the Interstate Forest Fire Suppression Compact would provide greater forest fire protection for federal and state lands.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Tom Rolfs, Department of Corrections (pro)