

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5958

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS, APRIL 24, 1991

Brief Description: Establishing a new fee structure for the vital records program.

SPONSORS: Senator McDonald.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Craswell, Vice Chairman; Bailey, Bluechel, Hayner, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Matson, Metcalf, Newhouse, Saling, L. Smith, and West.

Staff: Karen Hayes (786-7715)

Hearing Dates: April 17, 1991; April 24, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Vital records of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces in Washington State are maintained by the State Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics. Persons who request certified copies or information from such vital records for their research, statistical or administrative purposes are charged a fee of \$11. Persons who request to search vital records on file without making copies are charged a fee of \$8. Currently, fee revenues do not fully support the cost to operate this program.

SUMMARY:

The department shall establish fees for copies or record searches by rule at a level sufficient to operate the vital records program on a self-sufficient basis. Fee revenue shall be deposited in the state general fund.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

Vital records fees that are specifically referenced in the statute are raised by \$5. Persons who request certified copies or information from vital records for their research, statistical or administrative purposes are charged a fee of \$16. Persons who request to search vital records on file without making copies are charged a fee of \$13. The fee for additional copies of a death certificate, ordered at the same time as the first copy, is \$11. The Department of Health may waive these fees in cases of financial hardship.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: yes

Fiscal Note: requested

Effective Date: July 1, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR: None

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

The Department of Health may have to reduce public services or raise fees significantly if the vital records program is required to be self-supporting through user fees. The bill, as introduced, needs greater latitude so as not to inhibit the exchange of data between the department and health research organizations. Consideration should be given when setting user fees to the issue of maintaining public access to documents, especially for citizens who are required by government to present copies of vital records to prove their identity or circumstance.

TESTIFIED: CON: Elizabeth Ward, Assistant Secretary for Health Information, State Department of Health; Jerry Sheehan, American Civil Liberties Union; Mike Ryherd, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center