
**Criminal Justice & Corrections
Committee**

HB 2958

Brief Description: Ordering a study of missing person reports.

Sponsors: Representatives O'Brien, Carrell, Morrell, Lantz, Lovick and Rockefeller.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) to study the state's current practice of taking missing person reports by law enforcement agencies.

Hearing Date: 2/4/04

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

In 1985, the Legislature passed legislation that established the Missing Children Clearinghouse. It required the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to establish a missing children clearinghouse which includes the maintenance and operation of a toll-free 24-hour telephone hotline. The clearinghouse distributes information to local law enforcement agencies, school districts, the Department of Social and Health Services, and the general public regarding missing children (under the age of 18 years old). The information includes: pictures, bulletins, training sessions, reports, and biographical materials that will assist in local law enforcement efforts to locate missing children. The WSP also maintains a regularly updated computerized link with national and other statewide missing person systems and clearinghouses.

After a report is taken regarding a missing child, local law enforcement agencies must file an official missing person report and enter biographical information into the state's missing person computerized network within 12 hours.

There is no statutory requirement for law enforcement agencies to timely file a missing persons report for a person over the age of 18 years old and enter such information into a state database.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that federal and state statutes require local law enforcement agencies to immediately take missing person reports for children and then file and enter that information into the state missing person computerized network. However, there is no such consistent policy or requirement for cases involving missing adults. The Legislature believes that, at a minimum, a

written or electronic report should be initiated for all reports of missing persons made to law enforcement agencies across the state.

The WASPC is required to study the state's current practice of taking missing person reports by law enforcement agencies. The study must identify:

- The feasibility and costs to local law enforcement agencies for taking telephonic recordings of missing person reports;
- Ways to eliminate waiting periods for law enforcement officers to take a report;
- Ways to track and enter information from such reports into a state database;
- Ways to more rapidly identify human remains;
- Ways for more rapid prosecution of those convicted of harming or kidnapping a missing person;
- What is currently in state and federal statutes regarding how to handle missing person reports;
- Whether local law enforcement agencies show any consistency of compliance to current statutes; and
- Recommendations on how to improve how missing persons are reported, how missing reports are handled, how missing persons are identified, and how human remains of missing persons are both identified and handled.

The study shall be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2004.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.