

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2715

As Reported by House Committee On:
Technology, Energy & Communications

Title: An act relating to the state interoperability executive committee.

Brief Description: Regarding the state interoperability executive committee.

Sponsors: Representatives Ericks, Anderson, Morris, Haler, Crouse, Hankins, Nixon, Sump, P. Sullivan, Hudgins, Kilmer, Takko, Green, Sells, Clibborn, Simpson, Springer, Roberts, Ormsby, Morrell and McIntire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Energy & Communications: 1/24/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the State Interoperability Executive Committee to coordinate purchasing of all state wireless radio communications systems to ensure new equipment is Project-25 compliant.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY & COMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Morris, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Crouse, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ericks, Hankins, Hudgins, Nixon, P. Sullivan, Sump, Takko and Wallace.

Staff: Kara Durbin (786-7133).

Background:

In 2003, the Washington State Information Services Board established the State Interoperability Executive Committee (Committee) to take inventory of and evaluate all state and local government-owned public safety communications systems, and to prepare a statewide public safety communications plan. The plan was to set forth recommendations for executive and legislative action to ensure that public safety communications systems can communicate with one another and conform to federal law and regulations governing emergency communication systems and spectrum allocation. The plan was to include specific goals for improving interoperability of public safety communications systems and identifiable benchmarks for achieving those goals.

In December of 2004, the Committee submitted its final report to the Legislature. In its report, the Committee found that the majority of public safety responders are not able to communicate effectively or directly with their federal, state, regional, local, or tribal counterparts. The Committee also found there is a lack of financial resources to support a vision of interoperability within the state.

In November of 2005, the Committee completed their Technical Implementation Plan (TIP). The TIP provides a high-level approach for planning the transition of the current agency-based public safety radio systems to a standards-based, frequency-independent, multiple subsystems technology architecture. A key component of the TIP is moving towards a statewide, Project 25 (P-25) technology. The P-25 is a communications interoperability standard supported and used by the federal government, numerous state governments, and by the communications industry. Many federal funding opportunities for advanced communications systems suggest that equipment purchased should be P-25 compliant.

After adopting the TIP, the Committee adopted a requirement that when state agencies purchase new communications equipment, it must be P-25 compatible.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

New responsibilities are outlined for the Committee. The Committee is charged with coordinating the purchasing of all state wireless radio communications system equipment to ensure that, at a minimum: (a) any new trunked standard, after the transition from a radio over internet protocol network, is P-25; (b) any new system that requires advanced digital features is P-25; and (c) any new system or equipment purchases are upgradeable to P-25 standards. A representative from a Voice-over Internet Protocol company is added to the membership of the E-911 advisory committee. The committee must annually provide to the appropriate legislative committees an update on the status of E-911 service in the state.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill grants the Committee the authority to purchase future technologies that, at a minimum, satisfy the P-25 standard. It removes the requirement that the Committee coordinate purchasing for local governments. It also removes the requirement that all new trunked systems be P-25 compliant; instead, it requires that new trunked systems be P-25 compliant only after the transition from a radio over internet protocol. The emergency clause in the original bill is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2006.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is about how law enforcement and first responders communicate with each other in the event of a disaster. This bill sends a signal to law enforcement that P-25 will be the standard going forward. We have always struggled with this inability for different communications systems to talk to one another across jurisdictional boundaries. The technology keeps changing; we hope that the P-25 standard will give us some uniformity. We support the work of the Committee. This also gives assurances to local governments that P-25 will be the standard going forward.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; and Bruce Bjork, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.