

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5132

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 24, 2005

Title: An act relating to the release of personal information.

Brief Description: Protecting public employee personal information.

Sponsors: Senators Carrell, Schmidt, Benson, Swecker, Honeyford, Delvin, Schoesler, Roach, Mulliken and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/10/05, 2/24/05 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5132 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Fairley, Haugen, Kline, Mulliken and Pridemore.

Staff: Cindy Fazio (786-7405)

Background: Many specific pieces of information are exempt from public inspection and copying. Some examples are:

- the personal information of students in public schools;
- patients or clients of public institutions or public health agencies;
- welfare recipients;
- public agency employees, appointees, or elected officials;
- information about taxpayers;
- specific intelligence information and investigative records compiled by investigative and law enforcement agencies;
- information revealing the identity of persons who are witnesses to or victims of crimes or who file complaints with investigative, law enforcement, or penology agencies, if the disclosure would endanger any person's life, physical safety, or property;
- the residential addresses and residential telephone numbers of employees or volunteers of a public agency.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Additional personal information about employees and volunteers of a public agency are exempt. Exemptions include:

- personal wireless telephone numbers, personal electronic mail addresses, social security numbers, emergency contact information; and
- the names, dates of birth, residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal electronic mail addresses, social security numbers,

and emergency contact information of dependents of employees or volunteers of a public agency.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The personal information of individual home care providers is protected from disclosure under the Public Disclosure Act, as well as that of public employees, and volunteers of public agencies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: With the ease of communication of a large amount of information over the internet, we need to find ways to protect personal information so that vulnerable people are not subject to its misuse. Law enforcement community members are subject to threats to themselves and their families. They need protection of their personal information. Open government is very valuable to our society but there are some types of information, such as personal information, that the public does not need to have. This legislation is an addition to current protections. Perhaps continuing to include specific examples is not the best way to address the problem. Creating lists always creates the potential for things to be left out, then more legislation is needed. Under this legislation, media will be barred from obtaining next of kin information on accident victims and general interest family information about public officials.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: Ronald Thompson, Allied Daily Newspaper. PRO: Dennis Eagle, Washington Federation of State Employees; Don Hall, Washington State Parks and Recreation; Aaron Cole, Department of Corrections; Bill Jarmon, Deputy Chief, Department of Fish and Wildlife.