

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5336

As of February 2, 2005

Title: An act relating to park rangers employed by the state parks and recreation commission.

Brief Description: Concerning park rangers employed by the parks and recreation commission.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/2/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: A general authority law enforcement agency is an agency, department, or division of state or local government with the primary function of detecting and apprehending persons committing infractions or violations of traffic or criminal laws. The Washington State Patrol and Department of Fish and Wildlife are general authority law enforcement agencies. Officers of these agencies are considered general authority peace officers.

A limited authority law enforcement agency is an agency, department, or division of state or local government that has the function of, among other things, apprehending or detecting persons committing infractions or violations of traffic or criminal law relating to a limited subject area. Eight agencies, including the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission), are considered limited authority law enforcement agencies. Officers of these agencies are limited authority peace officers. The Parks and Recreation Commission is authorized to vest employees with police powers to enforce the laws of the state.

Summary of Bill: The Commission is designated as a general authority law enforcement agency and its officers are general authority peace officers. The Commission's rangers, vested with these police powers, will enforce the statutes covering the Commission, its rules, and other statutes as instructed by the legislature. When instructed by the commission, rangers will exercise police powers and duties throughout the state.

Applicants for park ranger positions must be citizens of the United States and be able to read and write in English. Applicants must successfully complete a basic law enforcement course or basic law enforcement equivalency certification.

Park rangers are not members of the Washington Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System. Liability or claims of liability arising out of the exercise or alleged exercise of authority by a park ranger rest with the state. Additionally, park rangers may serve and execute warrants and processes issued by courts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Providing the Commission with general law enforcement authority will provide rangers with the flexibility to respond to incidents outside of parks when necessary.

Testimony Against: Providing the Commission with general law enforcement authority may be unnecessary if rangers can be made deputies. Also, providing rangers with law enforcement authority outside of park borders may take away their ability to perform duties in the park.

Who Testified: PRO: Dennis Eagle, Washington Federation of State Employees; Mohammad Mustafavinassab, Washington State Park Ranger.

CON: Frank Boteler, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Larry Erickson, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.