

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2505

As Reported by House Committee On:
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

Title: An act relating to providing funding for a patrol vessel for public protection and emergencies.

Brief Description: Providing funding for a patrol vessel for public protection and emergencies.

Sponsors: Representative O'Brien.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness: 1/16/08, 1/17/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) to convene a workgroup to study and make recommendations on enhancing the current Recreational Boating Enforcement Program to include coastal defense duties.
- Appropriates \$50,000 to the WASPC for the purpose of the study.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives O'Brien, Chair; Hurst, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Ross, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Goodman and Kirby.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

Patrol vessels are available in various sizes and designs and are often used by various military departments and police departments for patrolling large bodies of water, providing defense duties, law enforcement, and rescue and emergency missions.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Although the Washington State Patrol does not operate a patrol vessel, many local jurisdictions and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife have and operate small vessels for providing law enforcement assistance.

A portion of the Federal Homeland Security funding available to each state may be used for the purchase of patrol vessels.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The WASPC is required to convene a workgroup of sheriffs and emergency managers from the counties of Island, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan, Clallam, and Jefferson and other appropriate individuals. The workgroup must study and make recommendations regarding trying to enhance the current Recreational Boating Enforcement Program to include coastal defense duties. The WASPC must report the results of the study to the Legislature by December 31, 2008.

A total of \$50,000 is appropriated to the WASPC for purposes of facilitating the workgroup and study.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill deletes the provisions that: (1) required Island County to obtain a patrol vessel for providing coastal defense duties; and (2) appropriated \$500,000 to the WASPC for the purchase of the patrol vessel. Instead, provisions are added that: (1) requires the WASPC to convene a workgroup to study and make recommendations to the Legislature by December 31, 2008, on the enhancement of current recreational boating enforcement programs to include coastal defense duties; and (2) appropriates \$50,000 to the WASPC for the purpose of the study.

Appropriation: The sum of \$50,000.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Island County has expressed interest in obtaining a boat to patrol the waters around the county. The boat will be used by several surrounding counties so there may be several possible funding sources from not only local and state agencies but also from Federal Homeland Security funds. The sheriff of Island County is very supportive of this bill; however, it is suggested that the WASPC study this issue first.

(In support with concerns) Currently there is not enough federal money to go around to everyone. An amendment should be made to the bill that would establish a workgroup to study how a vessel can be purchased in the future and how such a vessel can be used to patrol the waters of Puget Sound. The workgroup should also consider working with the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to determine how their current Recreational Boating Enforcement Program can include coastal defense duties.

(Opposed) This is typically an area that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) currently performs. The agency has over 100 vessels, 22 officers, and works closely with the federal government, border patrol, and immigration and customs. They are also involved in commercial recreational fisheries and drug surveillance and interventions. The WDFW is opposed to the bill but would be happy to work with the WASPC and others to re-craft the bill to broaden all of the perspectives from a law enforcement area.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative O'Brien, prime sponsor; and Don Pierce, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

(In support with concerns) Jim King, Recreational Boating Association of Washington.

(Opposed) Bruce Bjork, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.