

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1437

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to a volunteer chaplain for the department of fish and wildlife.

Brief Description: Authorizing a volunteer chaplain for the department of fish and wildlife.

Sponsors: Representatives Dammeier, O'Brien, Pearson, Chandler, Miloscia, Haler, Armstrong, Morrell, Green, Kessler, Kristiansen and Smith.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/6/09 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife to use the services of a volunteer chaplain.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Jacks, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Smith, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Liias, McCoy, Nelson, Ormsby, Van De Wege and Warnick.

Staff: Anna Jackson (786-7190)

Background:

Various departments of the state and of local governments are authorized to use the services of volunteer law enforcement chaplains to provide emotional support and crisis intervention. Currently, law enforcement personnel of police, fire, and corrections departments, as well as medical examiners and coroners, the state patrol, and local law enforcement agencies may use the services of a volunteer chaplain. The emotional support provided by chaplains includes counseling, stress management, and family life counseling.

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.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) employs fish and wildlife officers to enforce the statutory duties and rules of the WDFW. Officers of the WDFW have the same police powers and duties as are vested in sheriffs and peace officers, and are authorized to serve and execute warrants.

Summary of Bill:

The WDFW is authorized to use the services of a volunteer law enforcement chaplain.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a straightforward bill that allows, but does not require, the WDFW to use chaplain services that may not be permitted under existing law. The WDFW must have the statutory authority to authorize the use of a chaplain, even though it would be on a volunteer basis, because the WDFW would have certain de minimus expenditures associated with using chaplains, such as providing badges, patches, and similar attire for chaplains.

Like other law enforcement officers, WDFW officers frequently experience tragic events in the field and, like other officers, need to share these experiences with someone they know they can confide in and trust. In addition, the families of WDFW officers who lose their lives in the field need the same emotional and practical support provided to the families of other law enforcement officers. This support can be of great value to family members of deceased officers and should be encouraged for all law enforcement officers.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dammeier, prime sponsor; Bruce Bjork and Justin Maschhoff, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Mike Neil, Pierce County Sheriff's Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.