

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1715

As Reported by House Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections

Title: An act relating to exemption of information contained in the department of corrections' security threat group database.

Brief Description: Allowing the department of corrections to exempt information contained in the internal database on security threat group data from dissemination under the public records act.

Sponsors: Representatives Klippert, Goodman and Moscoso; by request of Department of Corrections.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations & Elections: 2/21/13 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Exempts from public disclosure information contained in the security threat group database.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Taylor, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Carlyle, Fitzgibbon, Kristiansen, Manweller, Orwall and Van De Wege.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The Public Records Act (PRA) requires that all state and local government agencies make all public records available for public inspection and copying unless they fall within certain statutory exemptions. The provisions requiring public records disclosure must be interpreted liberally and the exemptions narrowly in order to effectuate a general policy favoring disclosure.

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 Corrections' (DOC) special investigations services unit collects, evaluates, collates, and analyzes data and specific investigative information concerning the existence, structure, activities, and operations of security threat groups, drugs, and violence within the DOC facilities and the participants involved. The data is entered into a centralized database and is used to maintain the safety and security of offenders, staff, facilities, and the public. Upon request, the data may be used to assist law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in developing evidence for purposes of criminal prosecution.

Summary of Bill:

All information contained in the security threat group database is confidential and exempt from public disclosure under the PRA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 bill is important to public safety. Gang violence and criminal activity is a big problem within the DOC populations. Half of all violence in the prisons are committed by gangs or groups. The DOC collects and monitors information and enters the data into a database. Inmates request this information. The bill exempts this information and allows sharing of the information to law enforcement entities. The bill basically exempts everything in the database. It should describe those records that are not disclosable. Some information should be released, but not information that could put people's lives in danger.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Klippert, prime sponsor; Dan Pachollce, Department of Corrections; and Rowland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.