

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5004

As Passed House - Amended:
April 15, 2015

Title: An act relating to establishing the position and authority of warrant officers.

Brief Description: Establishing the position and authority of warrant officers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Angel and Rolfes).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 3/17/15, 3/26/15 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/15/15, 70-28.

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House)**

- Authorizes any city or town, rather than only cities with a population of over 400,000, to maintain warrant officers within local police departments.
- Provides that the authority of warrant officers is established by local ordinance, and may include the authority to serve civil and criminal process and make arrests authorized by warrants.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Jinkins, Chair; Kilduff, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Goodman, Haler, Hansen, Kirby, Muri, Orwall and Walkinshaw.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Shea, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Klippert and Stokesbary.

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

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.

Cities with a population of over 400,000 are authorized to maintain warrant officers within the city police department. Warrant officers are limited-commission officers vested only with authority to make arrests authorized by warrants and other arrests as authorized by ordinance. The number and qualifications of warrant officers are fixed by ordinance and compensation is provided by the city. Warrant officers are not entitled to benefits through the Washington Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters' Retirement System on the basis of service as a warrant officer.

All criminal and civil process issuing from a municipal court of a city with a population greater than 400,000 must be directed to the chief of police of the city served by the court, the sheriff of the county in which the court is held, or the warrant officers.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Any city, code city, or town may create warrant officer positions within their city or town police departments pursuant to the same provisions as currently apply to warrant officer positions in cities of over 400,000 people. Warrant officers are vested with the special authority identified in ordinance, which may include the authority to make arrests authorized by warrants and other authority related to service of civil and criminal process. The chief of police of the city or town must establish training requirements consistent with the warrant officer job description as established in that jurisdiction. Training requirements must be approved by the Criminal Justice Training Commission.

Process issuing from any court that is directed to a police department in which a warrant officer position is maintained may be served or enforced by the warrant officer if such service is within the warrant officer's authority as identified in ordinance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: 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 will help cities and will keep more policemen on the street. It has bipartisan support. A warrant officer is vested only with the authority as identified in ordinance and can make arrests accordingly. This authorizes any city, code city, and town to maintain warrant officers. It also contains a training requirement for warrant officers.

Existing law only allows the City of Seattle to employ warrant officers, but they were being utilized in other jurisdictions until those jurisdictions discovered they were out of compliance with the law. There is a lot of uncompleted work now. Warrant units have been effective and cost-saving, and do a lot of work that would otherwise pull first responders off the street. An example is jail transport, which can take an hour.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Angel, prime sponsor; Luis Olan and Dennis Hughes, Bremerton Police Department; and James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.