

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1620

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government & Elections, February 23, 2022

Title: An act relating to responding to extreme weather events.

Brief Description: Addressing the response to extreme weather events.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Leavitt, Boehnke, Shewmake, Ryu, Robertson, Wicks, Duerr, Ramel, Valdez, Bronoske, Callan, Ramos, Rule, Santos, Simmons, Pollet, Hackney and Taylor).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/9/22, 68-28.

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 2/16/22, 2/23/22 [DP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Military Department to develop and implement an extreme weather response grant program, subject to appropriations, to assist with the costs of responding to community needs during periods of extremely hot or cold weather, or poor air quality due to wildfire smoke.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Hasegawa and Hawkins.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Wilson, J., Ranking Member.

Staff: Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

Background: The Emergency Management Act establishes a comprehensive program of emergency management in the state, which is administered by the Military Department

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

(Department) under the direction of the state's Adjutant General. The Adjutant General is responsible for developing a comprehensive emergency plan for the state. Each political subdivision—county, city or town—of the state must establish or jointly create a local organization for carrying out emergency management functions in accordance with the state comprehensive emergency management plan. In the event of a disaster beyond local control, the Governor, through the Adjutant General, may assume operational control over all or any part of emergency management functions in the state.

The Adjutant General, subject to the direction and control of the Governor, must prepare and administer a state program for emergency assistance to individuals who are victims of a disaster. Disasters include events that demand immediate action to protect public health or to provide relief to affected communities, as well as events that reach such a degree of destructiveness as to warrant the Governor proclaiming a state of emergency. The emergency assistance program may include grants, loans, gifts of services, equipment, supplies, materials, or funds to individuals who, as a result of a disaster, are in need of assistance and who meet eligibility standards for disaster assistance established by the Department of Social and Health Services.

Disaster Response Account. The Disaster Response Account (Account) is a dedicated account in the State Treasury. Money may be placed in the Account from legislative appropriations and transfers, federal appropriations, and other lawful sources. Expenditures from the Account are used to support state agency and local government disaster response and recovery efforts.

Summary of Bill: Subject to appropriations, the Department must develop and implement an extreme weather response grant program to assist political subdivisions and federally recognized tribes with the costs of responding to community needs during periods of extremely hot or cold weather, or in situations of severe poor air quality from wildfire smoke. The Department may adopt rules to administer the program.

The Department may award grants to political subdivisions and federally recognized tribes for reimbursement of costs if the costs are incurred:

- by communities that have demonstrated a lack of local resources to address community needs; and
- for the benefit of socially vulnerable populations.

The grant funding must be used to supplement, not supplant, other federal state, and local funding for emergency response.

Costs associated with the following activities are eligible for reimbursement:

- establishing and operating warming and cooling centers;
- transporting individuals to warming and cooling centers;
- purchasing supplies needed for cooling of congregate living settings;
- providing emergency temporary housing; and

- other related activities necessary for life safety during a period of extremely hot or cold weather, or in situations of severe poor air quality from wildfire smoke as determined by the Department.

For purposes of these requirements:

- "political subdivision" means any county, city, or town that has established a local organization for emergency management or any joint local organization for emergency management; and
- socially vulnerable populations include, but are not limited to, individuals with disabilities, individuals without vehicles, older adults, individuals with low incomes or experiencing homelessness, and individuals with limited English proficiency.

Disaster Response Account. Funds from the Account may be used to award grants as part of the extreme weather response grant program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The number of extreme weather events is increasing and a lot of communities do not have the necessary resources to provide shelter options. These events are unpredictable, dangerous and costly. Cities have to balance reserving funds while working to meet the immediate and urgent needs of the community, which has been especially challenging against a global pandemic. The city spends approximately \$40,000 per month to stand up an emergency shelter. If additional funding was available it would make the decision easier for the communities to open these facilities.

Extreme weather events are emergencies for much of the population. Specifically extreme heat because a lot of facilities do not have air conditioning in Washington. This last summer was the worst heat wave with over 400 Washingtonians dying of heat. These events can cause high temperatures, kidney failure and wildfire smoke can cause heart attacks, strokes and blood clots due to the small particles. We often lack the ability to reach as many people as we need to during these events. This would be beneficial to the communities to provide a safe place for community members during extreme weather events. National Guard and many other state agencies can assist with these needs if called on to do so.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Sharon Swanson, Association of Washington Cities; Breck Lebegue, WA Physicians for Social Responsibility; Hallie McCurdy, West Pierce Fire & Rescue; Chris Covert-Bowlds, MD, WA Physicians for Social Responsibility; Council

Member Kristina Walker, City of Tacoma; Edmund Jacobs, Self.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.