
**Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry
Committee**

HB 1177

Brief Description: Creating a missing and murdered indigenous women and people cold case investigations unit.

Sponsors: Representatives Lekanoff, Orwall, Reed, Berry, Ramel, Callan, Doglio, Timmons, Walsh, Reeves, Chopp, Duerr, Gregerson, Taylor, Wylie, Stonier, Pollet, Davis, Kloba and Ormsby; by request of Attorney General.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Cold Case Investigations Unit within the Office of the Attorney General for the purpose of assisting law enforcement agencies with solving cold cases involving missing and murdered indigenous women and people.

Hearing Date: 1/17/23

Staff: Corey Patton (786-7388).

Background:

In 2022 the state established the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force (MMIWP Task Force) in the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) and directed the MMIWP Task Force to review the laws and policies pertaining to missing and murdered indigenous people and develop related recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

The Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS) is a program within the AGO that tracks and investigates homicides and sexual offenses. The HITS is comprised of a team of investigators, as well as a database that serves as a central repository for detailed information on

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homicides and sexual offenses occurring in Washington and neighboring states. The HITS database relies on the voluntary submission of information by law enforcement agencies. The investigators who work in the HITS also provide expertise to other jurisdictions on homicide and sexual offense investigations.

Summary of Bill:

The Cold Case Investigations Unit (Unit) is created within the Office of the Attorney General (AGO), subject to appropriation, and is directed to work with the Homicide Investigation Tracking System for the purpose of assisting federal, municipal, county, and tribal law enforcement agencies with solving cold cases involving missing and murdered indigenous women and people. The Unit must prioritize assistance to jurisdictions that do not have sufficient resources to investigate cold cases. The Unit must include an advocate or case navigator whose primary function is to work with and maintain regular, consistent, and confidential communication with families of missing and murdered indigenous women and people, and to convey information between the investigators and families using culturally appropriate and trauma-informed practices.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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