

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SSB 5399

Title: An act relating to traffic offenses.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to traffic offenses.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senators Rossi, Kline, Costa and McCaslin).

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Makes technical corrections to allow the counting of prior serious traffic offenses as criminal history in sentencing for a current vehicular homicide when a prior DUI-related offense is also used to enhance the standard range of the sentence for the current offense.*
- *Makes use of an ignition interlock device mandatory in a deferred prosecution for an offender with a prior offense, or who had a BAC of more than 0.15, or had refused to take the breathalyzer test.*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background:

Prior Offenses as Criminal History in Vehicular Homicide Sentencing

The 1998 Legislature enacted ESSB 6166 to increase the penalties for driving while under the influence (DUI). The bill amended one part of the code and added a two-year enhancement for each prior DUI related offense when the current offense is vehicular homicide while under the influence. The same bill also amended another part of the code to exclude prior, DUI related convictions from consideration in the computation of the offender score when the current offense is vehicular homicide while under the influence, since, under the bill, each prior DUI conviction requires a two-year sentence enhancement. However, the language in the bill had the unintended effect of preventing consideration of prior, non-DUI related, serious traffic offenses when computing the score for the current offense of vehicular homicide while under the influence. Consequently, an offender convicted of vehicular homicide while under the influence could actually benefit by having a DUI related conviction in his or her criminal history.

Ignition Interlocks

ESSB 6166 directed courts to order people convicted of DUI to drive only a motor vehicle that is equipped with an ignition interlock device. The bill set forth the required time periods for the use of the ignition interlocks for all DUI cases except those involving a first-time offender with an alcohol concentration (BAC) level of less than 0.15. The bill allowed but did not require use of ignition interlocks in DUI related deferred prosecutions.

Summary of Bill:

Prior Offenses as Criminal History in Vehicular Homicide Sentencing

The rules are clarified for establishing the sentence for vehicular homicide when the offender has prior serious traffic offenses.

Prior DUI related convictions are not considered when computing the offender score for the current offense of vehicular homicide while under the influence, but a two-year sentence enhancement is added for each prior DUI related offense. Other prior, non-DUI related, serious traffic offenses are included in the offender score when the current offense is vehicular homicide while under the influence.

Ignition Interlocks

As a condition of granting a DUI related deferred prosecution petition, the court must order installation of an interlock device in certain cases. Interlocks are required when the DUI that gave rise to the deferred prosecution petition involved a BAC of 0.15 or higher, when the person refused the breathalyzer test, or when the person is charged with his or her second or subsequent DUI. The period of required use is one year if the offender has never previously been required to use an interlock, five years for a second required use, and 10 years for a third. The court may, but need not, order the use of an interlock in any other deferred prosecution.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Office of Program Research