

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5238

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 14, 1991

Brief Description: Requiring earthquake preparedness policies for public schools.

SPONSORS: Senators Bailey, Rinehart, Erwin, Murray, Oke, A. Smith, Johnson, Gaspard, Wojahn and Rasmussen.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Craswell, Murray, Pelz, Rinehart, and Talmadge.

Staff: Susan Mosborg (786-7439)

Hearing Dates: February 5, 1991; February 14, 1991

BACKGROUND:

There is scientific consensus that all of Washington State is at risk of moderate to extensive property damage and loss of life from an earthquake. More than 1,000 earthquakes are recorded in the state each year. A dozen or more of these produce significant shaking or damage. Large earthquakes in 1949 and 1965 killed 15 people and caused more than \$200 million in property damage. In addition, studies over the past decade indicate that a subduction earthquake of magnitude eight or greater is possible along the Pacific Northwest coast. An earthquake of that type and size was not part of previous regional risk assessments.

Studies following devastating earthquakes show more fatalities and greater emotional damage to children than to adults. Currently, there is no specific requirement that schools have earthquake policies or procedures in place. In reference to a State Board of Education requirement that school districts have procedures for the evacuation of buildings in a sudden emergency, a model earthquake policy is available to school districts from the Washington State School Directors' Association.

SUMMARY:

School districts must adopt by January 1, 1992, an earthquake preparedness policy that provides for: (1) training all students and staff in earthquake safety and earthquake hazard mitigation procedures; (2) a minimum of twice yearly earthquake drills; (3) annually notifying parents of school earthquake procedures; (4) coordinating earthquake response with the local office of emergency management and other immediate response organizations, communications

organizations, and utilities; (5) a plan for meeting the first aid and safety needs of students and staff for 72 hours following an earthquake; and (6) a plan for identifying and correcting, by 1996, nonstructural earthquake hazards in all school district facilities used for school purposes.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction, in consultation with the Department of Community Development, selects, trains, and works with personnel from educational service or school districts to assist school districts in: (1) assessing the seismic stability of school facilities; (2) planning for repairs, rehabilitation or rebuilding; and (3) implementing the required policies.

Appropriation: \$49,000 to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the technical assistance program.

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

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

TESTIMONY FOR:

A majority of students in the state live in areas of high seismic risk. An earthquake could occur at any time. The state cannot be surprised when it occurs.

Student safety is very important. The snowstorm earlier this year required some Seattle students to stay overnight at their school which was minor compared to what might happen after an earthquake. Some school districts are taking steps to prepare for an earthquake, but most are not prepared and little assistance is available to them.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

There is concern about addressing seismic hazards separately from other safety concerns such as radon and asbestos. There is a discussion about addressing them all through a long-term school facilities modernization program.

If the technical assistance program is popular, the amount of money appropriated will not go very far and there will be intolerable pressure to fix both nonstructural and structural school earthquake hazards.

TESTIFIED: Carole Martens, Dorothy Roberts, citizens (for); Fay Page, Washington State PTA (for); Jean Leonard, Seattle School District (for); William Lokey, Washington State Emergency Management Association (for); Mike Roberts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

