

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 6031**

**AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 5, 1992**

**Brief Description:** Modifying poison information center authority.

**SPONSORS:** Senators West, Johnson and Wojahn.

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators West, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Amondson, M. Kreidler, and Wojahn.

**Staff:** Sarena Seifer (786-7417)

**Hearing Dates:** January 16, 1992; January 22, 1992

**BACKGROUND:**

Public health and safety and consumer information responsibilities concerning toxic substances involve the Departments of Health, Labor and Industries, Agriculture and Ecology. Current state law authorizes only the Department of Health to support a statewide program of poison and drug information services conducted by poison information centers in Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and Yakima. These centers, housed in hospitals, respond to almost 130,000 calls annually from individuals seeking information on how to handle poisonings or to avoid exposure to pesticides, drugs or other substances. Current state biennial funding pays for approximately 38 percent of the centers' costs.

**SUMMARY:**

The services of the four existing poison information centers are consolidated into a single nonprofit center. Current law specifying the activities of poison information centers is repealed, and the new responsibilities of the single center are specified. The center's services are expanded to include coordination of outreach units and community education concerning occupational risks and environmental exposures as well as exposure to drugs and poisons. The center is authorized to receive and spend gifts, grants and endowments from public and private sources.

The Department of Health is directed to establish a system for consulting with other state agency programs to develop a coordinated and consistent response to poison incidents.

Specific funding for the purposes of the bill must be provided by June 30, 1992 or the act shall be null and void.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** available

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

A single center of poison information provides better assurance of a quality response system with coordinated and up-to-date information, full-time service from highly trained staff, and central data collection. The four hospitals which currently house the centers have faced substantially increased costs and declining state funding for their poison activities. The hospitals can no longer afford to provide poison response for the state and may have to withdraw from the program.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Susie Tracy, Washington State Poison Center Network (pro); Bill Robertson, Washington State Poison Center Network (pro); Chris Rose, Department of Health; Jack Cvitanovic, Department of Health; Steve Cant, Department of Labor and Industries; Ruth Benfield, Children's Hospital and Medical Center (pro); Terri Bonck, Mary Bridge Children's Hospital (pro); Robb Menaul, Washington State Hospital Association (pro)