

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6023

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 11, 1994

Brief Description: Transferring emergency management functions from the department of community development to the military department.

SPONSORS: Senators Winsley and Haugen

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; Loveland, McCaslin, Oke, Owen and Winsley.

Staff: Eugene Green (786-7405)

Hearing Dates: January 28, 1994; February 4, 1994

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

BACKGROUND:

Since World War II, the state's functions relating to emergency management (disaster planning and response) have been organizationally separate from the Military Department. The original structure was the old Civil Defense Department; in 1986, it was merged into the Department of Community Development as the Division of Emergency Management.

In most instances, emergency management personnel are civilians, and can be mobilized to assist with disasters. However, in any major disaster (like the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980) the Governor mobilizes the Military Department and assigns it the command responsibility.

In 24 states, both functions are performed under the umbrella of the Military Department itself. It has been reported that this combination has increased timely response, efficiency and coordination. The most recent examples have been demonstrated in the severe flood conditions in the Midwest this past summer.

SUMMARY:

The Military Department, instead of the Department of Community Development (DCD), administers the state's comprehensive emergency management program. Sections 1 through 6 accomplish this purpose by substituting the "military department" for "the department of community development," or "adjutant general" for "director" in most provisions directly relating to the emergency management program.

The term "director" is defined to mean "adjutant general" for purposes of administering emergency management functions.

Sections 7 through 13 provide the standard transfers of powers and duties, personnel and equipment, rules and pending business and other generic functions from DCD to the Military Department.

The effective date is set as July 1, 1994, to coincide with the end of the fiscal year.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

Effective Date: July 1, 1994

TESTIMONY FOR:

The state of Washington is probably the least prepared of all states (at the state level) for an emergency. DCD does not hire people with the needed skills.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Removing emergency management from DCD will accomplish nothing.

TESTIFIED: PRO: Neil Clement, WA State Emergency Mgmt. Assn.; Phyllis Mann, Kitsap County Dept. Emergency Mgmt.; Lavon McLord, WA State Emergency Mgmt. Assn.; Keith Eggen; CON: Don Krupp, WA State DCD

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

The House striking amendment codifies the current policy of the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development with regard to reimbursement of out-of-jurisdiction fire fighters called into service under a mobilization plan (sections 5 and 6 of the striking amendment).