

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6168

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE, FEBRUARY 3, 1994

Brief Description: Exempting from public disclosure certain enhanced 911 information.

SPONSORS: Senators Fraser, Hochstatter and Sutherland; by request of Department of Community Development

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6168 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators A. Smith, Chairman; Ludwig, Vice Chairman; Hargrove, Nelson, Quigley, Roach, Schow and Spanel.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Hearing Dates: January 27, 1994

BACKGROUND:

The Washington public records statute provides several categories of information which are exempt from public inspection and copying. Many of the categories protect personal information.

In order to provide adequate emergency response under 911, it is necessary for public agencies to collect personal information, such as address, phone number, medical condition and nature of the circumstances generating the call. Citizens dialing 911 for assistance may freely supply information which they would normally guard from disclosure. All public safety agencies answering calls to 911 create records of the information given to them during the process of answering calls and assisting citizens. Additionally, the process of establishing and maintaining the data base records for the operation of an enhanced 911 system also requires access to confidential records.

SUMMARY:

An additional category of information is exempt from public disclosure under the public records statute. Information that is collected and held for emergency response purposes and information that is developed for managing an enhanced 911 telephone system are not subject to public inspection and copying.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The type of information which may remain confidential is limited. Information relating to addresses, telephone numbers, personal health, or physical safety need not be disclosed, as well as information developing and updating the database of a 911 system.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

Effective Date: July 1, 1994

TESTIMONY FOR:

People release very personal information during a 911 call, and such information should not be open for public inspection.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

There have been no abuses of the 911 system, and the media should have access to such information particularly if an investigation is warranted.

TESTIFIED: Bob Denning, 911 System Coordinator (pro); Roland Thompson, Media Groups (con)