

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6268

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

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of thumbprint scans to prevent fraud.

SPONSORS: Senator A. Smith

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators A. Smith, Chairman; Ludwig, Vice Chairman; Nelson, Niemi, Quigley and Roach.

Staff: Susan Mahoney (786-7717)

Hearing Dates: February 1, 1994; February 3, 1994

BACKGROUND:

Millions of dollars are lost each year in the state of Washington due to fraud committed in obtaining public assistance benefits. A great deal of the fraud committed is perpetuated by the use of false identifications. Under our current system, the only way to attempt verification of a person's identity is to check an applicant's name, social security number, and date of birth against records already in existence. There is no system in place to identify those individuals who use multiple identities to obtain duplicate assistance.

Technology has been developed that allows an electronic scan of a person's thumbprint to be collected for accurate verification of a person's identity. Thumbprints are not subject to the same type of fraudulent scams associated with the use of paper or photographic identification. The types of photographic identification most often misused are drivers' licenses or state photo identicards.

Other states that have employed this technology have saved millions of dollars in benefits paid to fraudulent applicants. This system would also benefit other public and private enterprises that rely on a person's driver's license or state identicard for identification.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Licensing (DOL) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) are authorized to implement and use an electronic thumbprint scan system. A thumbprint scan is required at the time of an original or duplicate application for, or renewal of a driver's license or identicard. A

thumbprint scan is also required at the time of an application for or review of DSHS public assistance benefits. The system implemented shall allow for interaction between DOL and DSHS thumbprint records subject to confidentiality requirements.

DOL is directed to keep records of the thumbprint scans with the picture negatives of the person scanned. The department's print records shall not be made available for public inspection or copying, but the records shall be open to official law enforcement agencies to assist in investigation of suspected criminal activity. The records may also be provided to the next of kin if the person is deceased.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 27, 1994

TESTIMONY FOR:

Will save millions of dollars in fraudulent benefits paid each year. Will also reduce fraud in any area that relies on the verification of a person's identity through the use of a driver's license or state identicard. Helpful to law enforcement, public and private enterprise, and state agencies to investigate and reduce fraud.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

New technology that needs more time to be studied. Cost prohibitive. Invasion of privacy. Opens the door to increased government intrusion and abuse.

TESTIFIED: PRO: Larry Mount, WA Retail Assn.; John Wirbirn, WA Trust Bank; Brian Peterson, WASPC; Neil Goodman, US Secret Service; Jeff Anthony, National Register Inc.; Jeff Cox, WA Retail Assn.; Laurie Evans, DSHS (con); Merton Cooper (con) Capt. Tim Erickson, Rick Phillips, WSP