

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1017

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to emergency management.

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

Sponsors: By House Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Representatives D. Schmidt, Horn, Robertson, Padden, Lisk, Scott, Dyer, Thompson, Goldsmith, K. Schmidt, Sehlin, Campbell, Sheldon and Talcott).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations: 1/10/95, 1/20/95 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

House Second Reading: 2/3/95.

Passed House: 2/17/95, 70-24.

Senate Amended.

House Concurred.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Reams, Chairman; Goldsmith, Vice Chairman; L. Thomas, Vice Chairman; Rust, Ranking Minority Member; Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chopp; R. Fisher; Hargrove; Honeyford; Hymes; Mulliken; D. Schmidt; Sommers; Van Luven and Wolfe.

Staff: Bonnie Austin (786-7135).

Background: Since World War II, the state's functions relating to emergency management 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 1993, the Legislature merged the Department of Community Development with the Department of Trade and Economic Development.

The new Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development is organized into six core service areas, including: community-based family services; trade and economic sectors; local development assistance; growth management; housing; and public safety. The public safety core service area includes both fire protection and emergency management services.

In most instances, emergency management personnel are civilians and can be mobilized to assist with disasters. However, during major disasters such as the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980, the Governor mobilizes the National Guard and assigns it the command responsibility.

In approximately half of the states, emergency management functions are administered under the Military Department. It has been reported that during major disasters, such as the 1993 Midwest flooding, this type of administration increases timely response, efficiency, and coordination.

In 1994, the Legislature unanimously passed SB 6023, which transferred administration of the state's comprehensive emergency management program to the Military Department. However, Governor Lowry vetoed the legislation in its entirety.

Summary of Bill: Administration of the state's comprehensive emergency management program is transferred from the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) to the Military Department. All powers and duties, personnel and equipment, rules and pending business are transferred from CTED to the Military Department.

CTED's fire mobilization policy regarding the reimbursement of nonhost fire protection authorities is codified. All nonhost fire protection authorities are eligible for state reimbursement, even if they responded prior to state mobilization under a mutual aid or other interlocal agreement.

Reimbursement of host fire districts is provided for under the state mobilization plan when the host district has exhausted all of its resources and the resources of its local mutual aid network. Reimbursement to the host district must be done in as timely a manner as possible.

The Military Department must develop a strategic plan to enhance coordination and efficiency and decrease costs. Plan elements are specified. A summary of the plan must be submitted to the Legislature by July 10, 1996.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1995.

Testimony For: In order to increase state government efficiency and decrease costs to the taxpayers, the emergency management program should be under the supervision of the Military Department. The Military Department is already involved in responding to the needs of the community on a daily basis. When an emergency takes place, who knows the area best, but people who live in the area.

This bill unanimously passed the Legislature in 1994. This transfer will result in long-term savings to the state because the National Guard can rent the equipment it needs from the federal government when emergencies occur. The state will not have to purchase its own equipment. The Governor's budget includes \$11 million for a new building for this program. If it is moved to the Military Department, this building will not be needed.

The United States military is taking a greater role in disaster response. This bill eliminates duplication, allows for the coordination of planning and training, and provides daily contact among response entities. The National Guard provides 24-hour coverage and CTED does not. Over 3,000 National Guard personnel responded to the Chelan fires this summer.

Testimony Against: Response is only one of the three major aspects of emergency management. CTED plays a vital role in disaster recovery. It is uniquely suited to this task because of its contacts with federal government and federal funding sources. After the Chelan fire, CTED's tourism division played an important role in the recovery. CTED is also focused on local governments, and that makes it uniquely suited to helping local governments plan and prepare for emergencies.

The Governor's budget assumes the integration of the divisions of fire protection and emergency management within CTED, with a resulting \$500,000 savings.

Testified: Rep. Dave Schmidt, prime sponsor; John Lindstrom, Military Department; Keith Eggen, Engineering Consulting Engineers; Bill Lokey, Pierce County Emergency Management Planning; and Andrew Lofton, Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.