

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1136

As Amended by Senate

Title: An act relating to inmate welfare accounts.

Brief Description: Requiring twenty-five percent of inmate welfare accounts to be used for victims' compensation.

Sponsors: Representatives Ballasiotes, Kessler, Campbell, Costa, Padden, Delvin, Hargrove, Basich, Tokuda, Lisk, Dyer, Mastin, Schoesler, Blanton, Sheldon, Lambert, L. Thomas, Backlund, Van Luven, Benton, Buck, Crouse, Chappell, Wolfe, Huff, Mitchell, Hickel, Thompson, Foreman, Sherstad, Chandler, Clements, Patterson, Mulliken, Honeyford, Cooke, Johnson, D. Schmidt, Pennington, Hymes, Kremen, Carrell, Mielke and Sheahan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Corrections: 2/10/95, 2/15/95 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/7/95, 96-0.

Senate Amended.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Ballasiotes, Chairman; Blanton, Vice Chairman; Sherstad, Vice Chairman; Quall, Ranking Minority Member; Tokuda, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cole; Dickerson; Koster; Radcliff and Schoesler.

Staff: Antonio Sanchez (786-7383).

Background: The inmate welfare fund is established to hold and expend inmate generated funds for activities which contribute to the betterment of the offender population. The Department of Corrections headquarters maintains a portion of these inmate welfare funds in a main account, and each one of the institutions also has a separate sub-account for a portion of the funds they collect. Revenue for the inmate welfare account is derived from profits gained from the inmate store, telephone commissions on collect calls, profits from vending machines, donations, and other miscellaneous proceeds such recycling of aluminum cans, or contraband money.

Some of the activities paid for from the inmate welfare fund include:

1. Recreation equipment and supplies;
2. Hobby crafts;
3. Holiday events (including Christmas gifts to inmates) miscellaneous refreshments and tournament prizes. The total expenditures cannot exceed a maximum of \$50 per each inmate per year;
4. Humanities, arts, and performance honorariums;
5. Extended family visit program including cost of state employees salaries directly related to management of the program and other costs related to the program;
6. Visiting areas;
7. Public performance licenses and league fees;
8. Inmate-view television systems (i.e. monthly cable fees);
9. Offender newsletter;
10. Library supplies;
11. Religious supplies;
12. Inmate store salaries and benefits;
13. Donations to non-profit organizations that provide a direct and identifiable benefit to inmates if approved by the department.

During the 1995 -1997 biennium the inmate welfare fund is expected to have a beginning balance of funds of \$1,148,739 and a total gross revenue of \$3,799,409. The total expenditures are expected to be \$4,571,702 during this period of time while the end fund balance is expected to be \$376,446.

Currently the public safety and education account does not receive any funds from the inmate welfare account for crime victims compensation.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Corrections is required to deposit no less than 25 percent of the total funds collected for inmate welfare accounts into the public safety and education account for the crime victims compensation program.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The amendment requires that funds transferred to the Department of Labor and Industries for the Crime Victims' Compensation Program from the inmate betterment fund must take priority over any expenditure of betterment funds. The transfer of funds is also required to be reflected on the monthly financial statements of each institution's betterment fund subaccount. The funds transferred to the crime victims' program are intended to be in addition to the funds appropriated in the budget for this account and not intended to reduce the level of funding provided by the appropriation.

Technical housekeeping changes are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: These funds can be best used to help victims and their families. The physical and mental suffering by victims is something that offenders should have direct responsibility for addressing.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Tom Rolfs, Department of Corrections; and Eugene St. John, Washington Public Employees Association (pro).

Votes on Final Passage:

Yeas 96; Excused 2

Excused: Blanton, Grant