

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1302

C 78 L 96

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to food stamp crimes.

Sponsors: Representatives Delvin, Costa, Appelwick, Hickel, Robertson, Sheahan, Padden, L. Thomas and Mastin.

House Committee on Law & Justice

Senate Committee on Law & Justice

Background: The federal food stamp program provides eligible households with food coupons that may be used for the purchase of food products. In Washington, the food stamp program is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) according to the federal statute and regulations. The federal government pays for 100 percent of the services provided and 50 percent of the administrative costs incurred by DSHS.

Eligibility for the program is determined on the basis of the size of the household and the household's resources and income. Households that receive food coupons may use them only to purchase food from retail food stores approved for participation in the food stamp program.

State law establishes criminal penalties for persons who sell food coupons and purchase or traffic in food coupons. A person who purchases or traffics in food coupons is guilty of a class C felony if the coupon's value exceeds \$100 and a gross misdemeanor if the coupon's value is \$100 or less.

The crime of purchasing food coupons requires that the person purchase coupons issued to another person under the state implemented food stamp program. This language could preclude prosecution of a person who purchases food coupons from an undercover police officer because the officer is not issued the coupons under the state program.

Summary: The crimes relating to unlawful purchase or redemption of food coupons are amended to provide that it is illegal to purchase food stamps as defined by the federal food stamp act or redeem food stamps as defined by the federal food stamp act in violation of the provisions of that act.

References to food "coupons" are replaced with references to food "stamps."

Votes on Final Passage:

House	94	0
Senate	48	0

Effective: June 6, 1996