

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5332

As Reported By House Committee On:
Energy & Utilities

Title: An act relating to multimedia kiosks of the Washington information network.

Brief Description: Prohibiting the department of information services from spending funds for multimedia kiosks for the Washington information network except for maintenance and operation of existing kiosks.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Energy & Utilities (originally sponsored by Senators Finkbeiner, Strannigan, Schow and Benton).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Energy & Utilities: 3/25/97, 3/26/97 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Crouse, Chairman; DeBolt, Vice Chairman; Mastin, Vice Chairman; Poulsen, Ranking Minority Member; Morris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bush; Cooper; Honeyford; Kastama; Kessler; Mielke and B. Thomas.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Mulliken.

Staff: Margaret Allen (786-7110).

Background: In 1994, the Legislature created the Public Information Access Policy Task Force to address the issue of how to increase public access to government information using electronic methods. The task force released its findings and recommendations in December 1995.

Based on those recommendations during the 1996 session, the Legislature enacted legislation encouraging state agencies and local governments to make public records widely available electronically. The technologies employed were to allow members of the public throughout the state to access government documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at little or no cost, and without needing extensive technological skills.

Pilot Project. The 1996 legislation also established the Government Information Locator Service (GILS) pilot project to design and test an electronic information locator system that would allow members of the public to locate and access electronic public records. The state library, with the assistance of the Department of Information Systems (DIS) and the state archives, was to design the system after considering multiple technologies, including kiosks.

Washington Information Network. The Washington Information Network (WIN) is a network of 48 electronic kiosks installed by the DIS across the state in high traffic, public places.

The WIN began as a pilot project in August 1994, to give citizens electronic access to government. For example, a person can use a kiosk to compare insurance rates, choose a camping site, search for employment, or review a list of unclaimed property held by the Department of Revenue. According to the DIS, nearly than 583,000 people have used 42 government services provided by 24 agencies through the WIN; more than 1,400 of those people have located employment. In addition, owners have retrieved \$322,000 in unclaimed property.

The DIS has predicted the WIN eventually will grow into a 200-kiosk system.

The DIS receives money from the state revolving fund for the installation and maintenance of the kiosks, and bills agencies for the cost of having agency information available through the WIN. The DIS reports estimated total kiosk expenditures of \$4,428,653 through June 1997.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature finds the 48 kiosks have played an important role by ensuring electronic access to government services and information for citizens (1) who lack access to home computers or electronic network services; (2) who lack technical or literacy skills to use computers; and (3) with disabilities. However, the Legislature further finds the kiosks may not be the most cost-effective, long-term technology through which to offer public electronic access. The Legislature recognizes the efforts of the DIS in exploring and developing more cost-effective successor technologies and applications for the electronic delivery of government services and information.

The DIS is prohibited from expending funds to increase the number of WIN kiosks in counties with populations of at least 100,000. The DIS may maintain and operate existing kiosks on an interim basis, while developing more efficient and cost-effective technologies.

The term electronic kiosks– is defined to mean public electronic access terminals, similar to those deployed on the effective date of the act, that rely on dedicated circuits and do not provide Internet connectivity or financial transactions.

By January 1, 1998, the DIS must report to the appropriate legislative committees on the following matters: (1) developments in networking technology as they relate to the WIN, including the use of home, library, and office-based work stations to provide public access to government services and information; and (2) DIS efforts to develop cost-effective alternative or successor technologies for the public electronic delivery of such services and information.

In designing the GILS pilot project, the state library, with the assistance of the DIS and the state archives, must also consider successor technologies to kiosks.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The substitute bill prohibited the DIS from increasing the number of kiosks in any county.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The WIN program has been well received in rural areas; it allows a citizen to conduct business or to interact with the state at a time of day convenient for the citizen. The DIS plans to keep the number of current kiosks at 48, and to use smaller and less expensive kiosks in the future. They will fit well in library settings.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Pro) Todd Sander, Department of Information Services.