

# HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

## HB 1674

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**Title:** An act relating to the Washington state reformatory.

**Brief Description:** Increasing the capacity of the Washington state reformatory.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dunn and Alexander.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONS

**Staff:** Yvonne Walker (786-7841)

**Background:** In 1978, inmates at the Washington State Reformatory (WSR) filed a suit claiming unconstitutional conditions existed at the facility. In 1981, the Department of Corrections (DOC) entered into a consent decree that mandated several actions occur. At that time, the population at WSR was well over 1,000 offenders. One of the mandates of the consent decree was to bring the population down to 656 offenders by 1983 which approximated single occupancy cell conditions.

Over the next several years the department started the population reduction in WSR. In the late 1980's, the department began petitioning the court to set aside the consent decree but the court resisted. Finally in early 1992, based upon an evaluation which reported that the WSR was sized to manage a maximum population of 768 inmates, the court lifted the consent decree thereby allowing the department to have full control of the institution.

Since the early 1980's, the DOC has been single-bunking the prison in conformance with federal consent decrees related to conditions of confinement. The DOC's rationale for single-bunking includes cell size. There are currently 632 cells (totaling 54 square feet each) and 60 cells (totaling 60 square feet each); 80 square feet is DOC's standard policy for single cell bunking.

During the 1995 Legislative session, the DOC proposed converting the WSR from medium-security to close-custody (by the DOC's policy, close custody cells are single-bunked). The Senate-passed the 1995-97 capital and operating budgets providing funding for the conversion, though neither the House nor final Legislative budgets approved the conversion. In 1996, the DOC again requested conversion funding. The conversion was approved in both the House and Senate versions of the 1996 supplemental capital budget. The Legislature could not reach agreement on the supplemental capital budget, however, and funding was not provided for the conversion. Governor Lowry's 1997-99 capital and operating budgets proposals again provide funds for the conversion.

**Summary:** The Department of Corrections is required to house two inmates to each housing cell containing two beds at the Washington State Reformatory located in Monroe, Washington.

**Require the Exercise of Rule- Making Powers:** No

**Fiscal Note:** Received on February 20, 1997.

**Effective Date:** This bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.