

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2707

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to sex offenders in inmate work programs.

Brief Description: Prohibiting sex offenders in inmate work programs from obtaining private individuals' names.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Criminal Justice & Corrections (originally sponsored by Representatives Backlund, Quall, Dickerson, Koster, O'Brien, Scott, Sullivan, Lambert, Cairnes, Wood, McDonald, Sherstad, Mulliken, Kessler, Ogden, Cooke, Conway, Anderson, Dunshee, Gardner, Ballasiotes and Dunn).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/27/98, 2/6/98 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/10/98, 96-0.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Ballasiotes, Chair; Benson, Vice Chairman; Koster, Vice Chairman; Quall, Ranking Minority Member; O'Brien, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cairnes; Dickerson; Hickel; Mitchell and Sullivan.

Staff: Mark Hamilton (786-7310).

Background: Currently, there are no statutory prohibitions on what types of offenders may have access to certain information when participating in an inmate work program.

Summary of Bill: Prohibits an inmate convicted of a sex offense who is participating in a work program from obtaining access to private individuals' names, addresses, and telephone numbers. The burden is on the administrators of the work programs to ensure this. Includes emergency clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 1998.

Effective Date: The amended bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Several incidents have occurred in which an inmate convicted of a sex offense obtained a private citizen's personal information while participating in a work program, then later used that information to contact the person. Those contacted had called a toll-free phone number to obtain information about Washington state parks, and, unbeknownst to them, spoke to an inmate, giving their addresses in the process. When these people were later contacted, in the form of a Christmas card, they were shocked to find out that they had unwittingly spoken and given personal information to convicted sex offenders. In addition, they fear that their families' safety may have been, or will continue to be, jeopardized due to these incidents. While the Department of Corrections immediately discontinued this "tele-information" program and reassigned its supervisor when informed of the problem, the bill would keep this from happening. Currently, there is only one telemarketing operation within the Department of Corrections work programs. It is a Class I business, run through a private company. There are no sex offenders working in that program. The National Institute of Corrections will be assisting the Department of Corrections with overall security issues regarding inmate work programs.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Alison Hamman; Dayna Bennion; Howard E. Yarbrough, Acting Administrator, Correctional Industries, Department of Corrections.