

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Olympia Washington

Bil Analysis

Bill No. HJR 4206

Providing chaplain for state employees
Brief title

Public Arg: 2/18/97

Reps. Chandler/Linville/Sump
Sponsor

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BACKGROUND:

Under Article I, Sec. 11 of the Washington State Constitution no public money or property may be appropriated or used for any religious worship, exercise or instruction or for the support of any religious establishment. A chaplain, however, may be employed by the state for its custodial, correctional and mental institutions, or by a county's or public hospital, district hospital, health care facility, or hospice as is deemed justified by the Legislature.

As originally adopted in 1889, Article I, Sec. 11 provided no exceptions to the prohibition against the appropriation or use of public money or property for religious purposes. In 1904, however, Article I, Sec. 11 was amended to allow the state to employ a chaplain for the state penitentiary and any state reformatory as deemed to be justified by the Legislature. This section was amended again in 1957, replacing state penitentiaries and reformatories with state custodial, correctional and mental institutions. In 1993, Article I, Sec. 11 was amended a third time to allow a chaplain to be employed by a county's or public hospital, district hospital, health care facility, or hospice as deemed to be justified by the Legislature.

An amendment to a state constitutional provision must be agreed to by two-thirds of the elected members of both houses of the Legislature and it must be submitted to the qualified voters of the state for their approval at the next general election.

SUMMARY:

The constitutional provision regarding the appropriation of public money for religious purposes is amended to allow a chaplain to be employed by the state or a county, city, town, or special district for law enforcement agencies, fire suppression agencies, or emergency medical response agencies as deemed to be justified by the Legislature.

FISCAL NOTE: Not Requested.