

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1066

As Reported By House Committee On:

Criminal Justice & Corrections

Title: An act relating to a study of county jails.

Brief Description: Providing for a study of county jails.

Sponsors: Representatives Ballasiotes and O'Brien.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/26/99, 2/3/99 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, the Department of Corrections, and the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to study the capacity of county jails.
- Requires the study to be submitted to the Legislature by January 1, 2001.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Ballasiotes, Republican Co-Chair; O'Brien, Democratic Co-Chair; Cairnes, Republican Vice Chair; Lovick, Democratic Vice Chair; Chandler; Constantine; Kagi and Koster.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

Over the years, the state's ever changing laws and the increases in offender population under correctional control has exceeded the supply of facilities, programs, and staff and, as a result, has led to an imbalance in the correctional system's supply and demand.

The 1997 Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs' Jail Information Report indicates severe overcrowding in 22 of the 38 county jails in Washington. In the same analysis, due to limited jail bed space, their report also shows overcrowding in six of the 19 city correctional facilities.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, in conjunction with the Department of Corrections and the Sentencing Guidelines Commission, must conduct a study of Washington's county jails. The report must:

- (1) Determine the capacity of each county jail and identify the most effective mechanism for tracking jail capacity and daily offender populations on a daily basis;
- (2) Develop offender classification systems applicable to county inmates; and
- (3) Create or adopt a risk assessment system for classifying county jail inmates that is compatible with the state's risk assessment system.

The study must be submitted to the Legislature by January 1, 2001.

The act is null and void if an appropriation is not included in the budget for this study.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The Sentencing Guidelines Commission is added to the consortium of agencies required to study the capacity of local jails in Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 1999.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Original bill) Several years ago the Legislature appropriated approximately \$250.5 million for the construction and expansion of local jails. Unfortunately, due to the numerous changes in laws, the funding for construction has not been able to keep up with the jail capacity and as a result, all but one county jail is overcrowded at this time.

Currently, the Department of Corrections houses over 14,000 inmates per day and the county and city jails house approximately 10,000 inmates on any given day. In addition, there are approximately 300,000 outstanding warrants that local law enforcement agencies

cannot act upon due to the lack of vacant beds. Each county jail administrator counts their capacity in a different way and as a result there is no state uniform way to find out exactly how many beds each county or city has vacant on a particular day. In order to get a handle on what the actual capacity is in each jail the state needs a master capacity plan which can be accomplished with this bill. It is not fair to constantly keep changing the law or adding new ones when there is no room in the "inn."

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Larry Erickson, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Karen Daniels, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Jim Thatcher, Department of Corrections; Roger Goodman, Sentencing Guidelines Commission; and Michael Shaw, Washington Association of Counties.