

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5212

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to school safety plans.

Brief Description: Providing for school safety plans.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Eide, Winsley, Thibaudeau, Franklin, Rasmussen and Costa).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/10/99, 4/2/99 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Washington State Patrol and the State Military Department, must adopt rules directing school districts to develop, manage and evaluate site-based plans to deal with emergency conditions or a crises, including a natural disaster or violent act.
- A school safety grant program is created.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; Schual-Berke and Stensen.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Cox; D. Schmidt; Sump and Wensman.

Staff: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Background:

The State Board of Education, as directed by statute, has issued rules requiring local school boards and governing bodies of private schools to develop and practice plans to evacuate school buildings in case of a sudden emergency. These plans are to be taught periodically to all school personnel and practiced as frequently as may be necessary.

Under current law, the state Military Department is responsible for comprehensive emergency management. This entails the preparation and implementation of all civilian emergency functions, including responding to disasters.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Washington State Patrol and the State Military Department, must adopt rules directing school districts to develop, manage and evaluate site-based plans to deal with emergency conditions or a crisis, including a natural disaster or violent act. The plan must be updated at least once every five years. In addition, the state board is required to develop standards for emergency plans, which must include who to contact in an emergency, evacuation procedures; procedures for responding to emergencies; and procedures for training students and certificated and classified staff.

A school safety grant program is created to be administered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The safety grants are used by school districts to: (1) update and develop emergency plans for every school, (2) train staff in implementing the plans, (3) acquire materials, and (4) practice the plans. The safety grant program expires June 30, 2003.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The amendment encourages schools to coordinate with local law enforcement, fire departments, and emergency management agencies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The violence-related tragedies that occurred in schools in the past few years underscore the need for more planning to prevent and address such tragedies. Students do not feel safe in school, which adversely affects their learning environment. Current programs on crisis plans in schools only contemplate natural

disasters. Schools need plans and training to deal with violent acts. Emergency management agencies at the state and local level can assist schools in preparing and implementing those plans.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Ashley Beckett, Emily McLeod, Kendahl Kapetan and Ester Hoffmer, Youth Advisory Council; Karen Davis, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Joe Pope, Association of Washington School Principals; Martin Grisham, Disaster Management Services; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Bob Maier, Washington Education Association.