

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2457

As Reported By House Committee On:

Criminal Justice & Corrections

Title: An act relating to escorted leaves of absence for prison inmates.

Brief Description: Narrowing reasons for escorted leave by prisoners.

Sponsors: Representatives Cairnes, Ballasiotes, Koster, B. Chandler, Bush, Lisk, Schoesler, Talcott, Radcliff, Pflug and Benson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/25/00, 1/26/00 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Deletes athletic contests from the list of legitimate escorted leaves of absence for an incarcerated inmate.
- Adds pre-release planning as a legitimate leave of absence for an inmate needing to leave a prison.

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; B. Chandler; Constantine; Kagi and Koster.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The superintendent of any Washington prison may, subject to the approval of the secretary of the Department of Corrections (DOC), grant an escorted leave of absence to an inmate confined in a state correctional facility.

Anytime an inmate is granted an escorted leave of absence, prior to his or her leave, the DOC must notify the county or city law enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the area of the inmate's destination.

Unless the inmate and his or her immediate family is indigent, the department may require that the inmate (or his or her immediate family) reimburse the state for the actual costs incurred arising from the granted leave of absence.

Legitimate leave of absence includes the following:

- to go to the bedside of the inmate's wife, husband, child, mother, or father, or other member of the inmate's immediate family who is seriously ill;
- to attend the funeral of the inmate's wife, husband, child, mother, or father, or other member of the inmate's immediate family;
- to participate in athletic contests;
- to perform work in connection with the industrial, educational, or agricultural programs of the department;
- to receive necessary medical or dental care which is not available in the institution; and
- for nonviolent offenders, to participate as a volunteer in community service work projects which are approved by the superintendent.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A leave of absence to participate in athletic contests is eliminated from the list of escorted leaves of absence that the DOC may approve for an inmate. However, pre-release planning is added to the list of legitimate escorted leaves of absences that the DOC may approve for an inmate.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Pre-release planning is added to the list of legitimate escorted leaves of absences that the Department of Corrections may approve for an inmate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received on January 25, 2000.

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

Testimony For: This would authorize the DOC to start the pre-release process in connection with the Offender Accountability Act. This would help offenders to start to get wraparound services such as employment, counseling, mentoring, and any needed treatment in an offender's anticipation for release.

Offenders should not be allowed to go outside of the prison to athletic contests.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Eldon Vail, Department of Corrections; and Larry Erickson, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.