

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5513

As Passed Senate, March 11, 1999

Title: An act relating to execution witnesses.

Brief Description: Augmenting provisions for execution witnesses.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Costa, Long, Franklin, Zarelli, Heavey, Hargrove, T. Sheldon, Rossi and Shin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/26/99 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 3/11/99, 44-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5513 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Long, Patterson, Sheahan, Stevens and Zarelli.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Persons wanting to witness the execution of an offender sentenced to death must apply at least 20 days prior to the execution date. The superintendent of the penitentiary designates the total number of witnesses and determines the number of witnesses allowed from media representatives, judicial officers, representatives from the victim's families, and representatives from the family of the defendant. Not less than 10 days prior to the execution, the superintendent files the witness list with the superior court and the court certifies the list.

Summary of Bill: No less than five media representatives can be designated as witnesses. Representatives of victims' families includes victim advocates of the immediate family members. Up to two law enforcement representatives may be selected as witnesses. The chief law enforcement officer where the crime was committed designates the law enforcement representatives. The prosecuting attorney may send a deputy prosecuting attorney.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The small restriction on the number of media who witness an execution does not limit the public's right to know what has occurred. Families need closure and sometimes need the support of a victim's advocate.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Bobbi Costa, Families and Friends of Violent Crime Victims.

House Amendment(s): Language is modified to clarify that the chief law enforcement officer of the agency that investigated the crime designates the law enforcement representatives.