

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5921

As Passed Senate, February 7, 2000

Title: An act relating to the disclosure of fire protection and building safety information.

Brief Description: Requiring the disclosure of fire protection and building safety information.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senator Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/24/99, 3/3/99 [DPS].

Passed Senate, 3/13/99, 46-0; 2/7/00, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5921 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Heavey, Chair; Kline, Vice Chair; Costa, Goings, Hargrove, Haugen, Long, McCaslin and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Landlords are required by state law to keep the premises of their building(s) fit for human habitation. Included is the responsibility to maintain the premises to substantially comply with applicable codes, to maintain the structural components of the building, to keep the premises pest free, to provide adequate heat and hot water, and to make all necessary repairs.

The Governor's Fire Protection Task Force made many recommendations concerning fire safety in boarding homes. The task force also looked at fire safety in multi-family dwellings, such as apartment buildings. Members of that task force suggest that tenants of multi-family dwellings be provided with written notice of fire safety procedures and equipment in the multi-family dwellings they rent.

Summary of Bill: The landlord of a multi-family dwelling must provide written notice to tenants that disclose the fire protection and safety information for the building, such as sprinkler systems, smoke detection devices, fire response plans, evacuation practices, smoking policy, and the fire safety characteristics of the premises. Tenants must be given emergency plans for the building. Both the landlord and the tenant must sign the statement and both parties must be provided with copies. Existing tenants must be notified by January 1, 2001.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Prospective tenants of multi-family dwellings need to rent knowing what fire protection the building has. Given the tragedy and deaths that occurred in the Kona Village apartment fire, it is good sense for renters to decide to rent or not to rent based upon the fire safety of the building. This bill only requires the landlord to disclose the information. They are not required under this legislation to add new fire safety devices.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Captain Eric Robertson, Washington State Patrol, State Fire Marshal; Gordon Walgren, Washington State Fire Chiefs; Paul O'Connor, Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board of Puget Sound.