

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1564

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to obstructing governmental operations.

Brief Description: Reenacting provisions relating to obstructing governmental operations.

Sponsors: By Representatives Casada, Lantz, Carrell, Hurst, Esser and O'Brien.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/15/01 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/9/01, 98-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/6/01, 46-0.

House Concurred.

Passed House: 4/16/01, 94-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Reenacts, without making any changes, certain provisions of law relating to obstructing governmental operations in order to respond to a court decision that may have invalidated those provisions because of a defective bill title and improper inclusion of multiple subjects in a 1995 act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Carrell, Republican Co-Chair; Lantz, Democratic Co-Chair; Hurst, Democratic Vice Chair; Boldt, Casada, Dickerson, Esser, Lovick and McDermott.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Lambert, Republican Vice Chair.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background:

In 1995 the Legislature included several provisions related to various criminal laws in a bill entitled "An Act Relating to insurance fraud." In December of last year, Division II of the state court of appeals held that the inclusion of one of those provisions violated the state constitution. That decision, *State v. Thomas*, 103 Wn. App. 800 (2000), overturned a conviction under the state's anti-profiteering law.

In 1984 the Legislature had enacted the Washington State Racketeering Act, which was to take effect July 1, 1985. The 1985 Legislature, however, substantially amended the act before it took effect. One of the changes was to rename the act the Criminal Profiteering Act. The 1985 legislation also put a 10-year "sunset clause" on the entire act. The sunset clause called for the act to expire on July 1, 1995, unless the Legislature enacted another bill before then to extend the life of the act.

In 1995 the Legislature repealed the sunset clause on the Criminal Profiteering Act. The repeal of the sunset clause was intended to prevent the act from expiring that July, and to extend the life of the act indefinitely. However, the repeal was done as part of E2SHB 1557 which was a bill entitled "An Act Relating to insurance fraud." E2SHB 1557 became Chapter 285, Laws of 1995.

Division II of the Washington State Court of Appeals held that this 1995 act "relating to insurance fraud," was invalid because it violated Article II, Section 19, of the state constitution. Article II, Section 19, requires that a bill contain only one subject, and that the subject be expressed in the title of the bill. The court found that the subject of "criminal profiteering" was not related to the subject of "insurance fraud," and therefore the bill violated the single subject requirement. Likewise, the court found that the subject of criminal profiteering was not "expressed" in the title of the bill, and therefore the bill violated the "subject-in-the-title" requirement. As a result, the attempted repeal of the sunset clause in 1995 was ineffective, and the court held that the criminal profiteering law had in fact expired on July 1, 1995.

The attempted repeal of the profiteering act's sunset clause was the subject of the court's decision in *State v. Thomas*. However, there were several other provisions in that same 1995 act that very likely could be found unconstitutional as well. Some of these provisions had to do with the crime of making false or misleading statements to public servants. The 1995 act created a separate gross misdemeanor crime of making a false material statement to a public servant, and removed a narrower but similar provision from the existing crime of obstructing a law enforcement officer. These provisions, if challenged, might also be found to be a second subject, not related to "insurance fraud," or to be a subject not expressed in the title.

Summary of Bill:

Provisions of Chapter 285, Laws of 1995 that dealt with the crimes of obstructing a law

enforcement officer and of making false or misleading statements to public servants are reenacted without change.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: This bill will implement the legislative intent of a 1995 act by correcting a technical flaw in that act. The 1995 legislation was a model package relating to insurance fraud and criminal profiteering that should be preserved and protected by reenactment. There is no substantive change to the law.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Patrick Sainsbury and Susan Storey, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; and Larry Shannon, Washington State Trial Lawyers Association.