

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2137

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to explosives on school premises.

Brief Description: Prohibiting explosives on school premises.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunt, Armstrong, Talcott, Quall, Wood, Delvin, Rockefeller, Fromhold, Keiser and Jackley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/21/01, 2/26/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Includes possession of explosives in the category of offenses for which an elementary or secondary school student shall be expelled for not less than one year.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Anderson, Republican Vice Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Cox, Ericksen, Keiser, McDermott, Pearson, Rockefeller, Santos, Schindler, D. Schmidt and Schual-Berke.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

A student who brings a firearm onto school grounds, school-provided transportation, or areas of facilities used exclusively for schools must be expelled for at least one year. A district may suspend or expel a student for up to one year if the student acts with malice and displays an instrument that appears to be (but is not) a firearm on school grounds, facilities, or school-provided transportation.

Students who are authorized by school authorities to possess firearms or rifles as part of demonstrations and lectures for safety courses are not subject to penalty.

As used in this context firearm– is defined by reference to the criminal code chapter on firearms and dangerous weapons.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Possession of an explosive is added to the behavior for which a one or more year period of expulsion from school is required. A student who brings an explosive onto school grounds, school-provided transportation, or areas of facilities used exclusively for schools must be expelled for at least one year. A student who acts with malice and displays what appears to be (but is not) an explosive or explosive device may be expelled or suspended for up to one year.

Students authorized by school authorities to possess explosives as part of safety courses are not subject to penalty.

Explosives are defined by reference to the explosives act and do not include legal fireworks.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

A clarification is added to distinguish legal fireworks from explosives. Expulsion or suspension from school is not required for the possession of legal fireworks on school grounds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 21, 2001.

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

Testimony For: Washington law currently allows only a 10-day suspension for possession of explosives on school campuses. Explosives are as dangerous, and potentially more dangerous than firearms and should carry the same consequence as firearms. Principals are charged with safety at schools. Firearms laws have helped tremendously. Schools have seen an increase in the possession of explosives. Including explosives with firearms laws is consistent with the state's efforts to keep schools safe and sends a clear message to students that this behavior will not be tolerated.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Hunt, prime sponsor; Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; and Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.