

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2710

As Reported by House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to the halal food consumer protection act.

Brief Description: Applying the consumer protection act to the sale of halal food products.

Sponsors: Representatives Van Luven, Veloria, Esser, Tokuda, Santos, Cooper, Morell and Nixon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/4/02, 2/6/02 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Makes the sale of food represented as halal, but known to be not halal, a gross misdemeanor and a violation of the consumer protection act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Clements, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Kenney and Lysen.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Halal food products are those foods prepared, processed, manufactured, maintained, and sold in strict compliance with the laws and customs of the Islamic religion. Some of the applicable restrictions for the preparation of halal foods are similar to those required for Kosher foods and certified organic foods.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A dealer whose inventory consists of more than 50 percent halal food products must: 1)

label all non-halal foods in a way consumers can easily differentiate between food products that are halal and those not halal; and 2) maintain and make available upon request written information about the preparation of halal foods.

A "dealer" includes any business that advertises or represents itself as selling or maintaining halal food, including manufacturers, slaughterhouses, wholesalers, stores, restaurants, hotels, caterers, summer camps, nursing homes, freezer dealers, and food plan companies.

Beginning December 1, 2002, a dealer who sells food represented as halal, but which the dealer knows is not halal, is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. Such a sale also constitutes a violation of the consumer protection act.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The requirement that dealers maintain and make available written information about the preparation of halal foods is conditioned on the information being available from the food manufacturer. A dealer is guilty of a violation if he/she sells food the dealer knows or should know is not halal but is represented by the dealer as being halal. The penalties for a violation do not become effective until December 1, 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except sections 3 and 4, the civil and criminal penalties, which take effect December 1, 2002.

Testimony For: (Original bill) The bill is about consumer protection and preventing misrepresentation by dealers. Food is a religious belief to the Islamic people and consumers want to be sure food that is represented and sold as halal is truly halal. The same provisions already are in place for vendors of Kosher foods. Most dealers separate types of foods in their markets, so labeling of non-halal foods will not be unnecessarily burdensome. There has been a tremendous growth of the Islamic religion in the United States. Similar legislation addressing the growth of halal food stores and restaurants has been passed in at least three other states. But some dealers in Washington continue to advertise and sell food as halal when it is known to be not halal. This bill is consistent with consumer protection for Kosher foods, with the added requirement that the dealer provide literature, if available.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Original bill) Representative Van Luven, prime sponsor; Ali-Salaam, The Institute of Service Leadership and Management; and Noor Shahin Hussain, Old Farm Market.