
Criminal Justice & Corrections Committee

ESSB 6076

Brief Description: Modifying the powers and duties of fish and wildlife law enforcement officers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senators Kline, McCaslin, Oke, T. Sheldon, Snyder, Hargrove and Rasmussen; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife).

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Designates the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) as a general authority Washington law enforcement agency.

Hearing Date: 2/27/02

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The DFW is charged with enforcing the state Wildlife Code. The DFW is a limited authority Washington law enforcement agency. As such, the enforcement authority of DFW agents is limited to a specific subject area. The DFW agents may only enforce the non-wildlife criminal laws of Washington when they are acting in their duty and the violation occurs in their presence. If such an event occurs, the DFW officer must report the activity to the Washington State Patrol (WSP).

In contrast, general authority Washington law enforcement agencies may enforce any traffic or criminal law of the state throughout the territorial boundaries of the state. An example of a general authority agency is the WSP.

Summary of Bill:

The DFW is designated as a general authority Washington law enforcement agency, with enforcement authority equal to that of the WSP. The DFW can enforce the traffic and criminal laws of the state throughout the territorial bounds of the state.

All fish and wildlife officers must be a citizen of the United States who can read and write the English language. All officers employed on or after the effective date of the act must successfully complete the basic law enforcement academy course, or an equivalency course, sponsored by the Criminal Justice Training Commission.

Fish and wildlife officers do not have the authority to conduct warrantless searches of noncommercial private areas or otherwise exceed constitutional search provisions.

Provisions of the bill do not provide membership in the Washington Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' (LEOFF) retirement system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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