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## Commerce & Labor Committee

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### ESSB 6412

**Brief Description:** Regulating disclosure of information by international matchmaking organizations.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Costa, Prentice, Winsley, Long, Keiser and Benton).

#### Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires international matchmaking organizations doing business in Washington to notify prospective foreign spouses of the availability of a background check and marital history information for its clients who are residents of Washington.
- Requires the organization to notify a client who is a resident of Washington when a foreign prospective spouse requests background information.
- Requires a client who is a Washington resident to provide a background check report and marital history information to the organization.
- Makes it a violation of the consumer protection act to violate the notice requirements.

**Hearing Date:** 2/25/02

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

#### Background:

Foreign social referral agencies, also known as international matchmaking agencies, bring together approximately 4,000 to 6,000 couples annually, who eventually marry and petition for immigration of the female spouse. Many of the female spouses come to the United States from the Philippines and from the independent states of the former Soviet Union.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates there are over 200 international matchmaking organizations operating in the United States. Federal law requires these organizations to provide accurate information about immigration laws to prospective female spouses in their native language.

**Summary of Bill:**

International matchmaking organizations must notify foreign prospective spouses that background checks and marital history information are available for prospective spouses who are Washington residents. Upon request for such information by a foreign prospective spouse, the organization must notify the Washington resident prospective spouse. The Washington resident must obtain a background check report from the Washington State Patrol, and must provide the report and marital history information to the organization.

The organization must forward the background report and marital history information to the foreign prospective spouse. Organizations may not knowingly provide continued services to facilitate further interaction between the prospective spouses until the organization has received the information from the Washington client and forwarded it to the foreign client.

Failure to provide notice, to forward requests and information, and to curtail services until such information is provided constitutes a violation of the consumer protection act.

**Rules Authority:** This bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making powers of an agency.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on September 1, 2002.