
Criminal Justice & Corrections Committee

SSB 6488

Brief Description: Creating a statewide registered sex offender web site.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Costa, Long, T. Sheldon, Eide, Winsley, Hale, Spanel, Jacobsen, Rasmussen, Gardner and Oke).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) to create a web site containing links to county operated web sites containing sex offender registration information.

Hearing Date: 2/26/02

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

Released sex offenders are classified into one of three risk levels: risk level I (low risk), risk level II (medium risk), and risk level III (high risk).

A public agency may release information to the public regarding a sex offender when the agency has determined that the disclosure is relevant and necessary to protect the public and counteract the danger posed by the offender. The extent of this disclosure must be rationally related to:

- The risk posed by the offender to the community;
- The location of the offender; and
- The need of the community for the information to enhance safety.

A law enforcement agency must consider certain guidelines when determining the extent of the disclosure depending on the risk level of the offender:

- For level I sex offenders, the agency must share the information with other law enforcement agencies and may share the information with 1) victims, 2) witnesses, and 3) individual community members living near the offender;

- For level II sex offenders, the agency may also share the information with 1) schools, 2) day care centers and providers, 3) businesses and organizations primarily serving children, women, or vulnerable adults, and 4) neighbors and community groups located near the offender; and
- For level III sex offenders and sex offenders registered as homeless or transient, the agency may share the information with the public at large.

A county sheriff must notify a community of the level III sex offender's registered address or location. In addition, the sheriff must publish a list of level III sex offenders in the county twice yearly. The list must also be maintained on a publicly accessible web site that must be updated once a month. Elected officials, public employees, and public agencies are immune from civil liability for damages arising from sex offender risk classifications or information disclosures, unless they are acting with gross negligence or in bad faith.

Summary of Bill:

The WASPC must create a publicly available web site that provides electronic links to county-operated web sites that offer sex offender registration information. The WASPC is immune from civil liability for damages arising from sex offender risk classifications or information disclosures, unless it is acting with gross negligence or in bad faith.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 19, 2002.

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