
State Government Committee

SSB 6660

Brief Description: Protecting personal information about law enforcement officers and their families.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Long, Kastama, Rossi, McAuliffe, McDonald, Costa, Hale, Keiser, Gardner, Oke and Rasmussen).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Exempts from public disclosure the personal information about a law enforcement officer and the officer's family, or information that could easily lead to the discovery of such personal information, that is necessary for the effective operation of a law enforcement agency.

Hearing Date: 2/25/02

Staff: Catherine Blinn (786-7114).

Background:

The Public Disclosure Act (PDA) requires agencies to make available for public inspection and copying all public records unless the information falls within a specific exemption. The exemptions to the PDA are narrowly construed to promote a public policy of keeping the public informed. Exemptions are specific, and generally focus on personal privacy, personal safety, or vital governmental interests. The list of exemptions includes:

- Personal information in files maintained for employees, appointees, or elected officials of any public agency to the extent that disclosure would violate their right to privacy;
- The residential addresses and residential telephone numbers of employees or volunteers of a public agency which are held by any public agency in personnel records, public employment related records, volunteer rosters, or mailing lists of employees or volunteers; and
- Applications for public employment, including the names of applicants, resumes, and other related materials submitted with respect to an applicant.

A person's right to privacy is only considered invaded or violated if disclosure of the information would be highly offensive to a reasonable person, and disclosure is not of

legitimate public concern. The privacy provisions contained in the PDA do not create any right of privacy beyond those rights specified in the law as express exemptions. Records custodians and public agencies, officials and employees are exempt from liability for any loss or damage caused by the release of a public record as long as they acted in good faith in attempting to comply with the law.

Summary of Bill:

In addition to the personal information in files maintained for employees, appointees and officials of a public agency, also exempt from public disclosure is the personal information about a law enforcement officer and the officer's family, or information that could easily lead to the discovery of such personal information, that is necessary for the effective operation of a law enforcement agency. This information includes, but is not limited to, residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, property and tax records, contents of the public employment record, and financial information other than the public salary paid to the officer.

Rulemaking Authority: No express authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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