

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2381

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Judiciary, February 26, 2002

Title: An act relating to the trafficking of persons.

Brief Description: Addressing the trafficking of persons.

Sponsors: House Committee on Criminal Justice & Corrections (originally sponsored by Representatives Veloria, Van Luven, Kenney, Dunshee, Romero, O'Brien, Darneille, Schual-Berke, Chase, Tokuda, Upthegrove, Edwards, Santos, Kagi and Haigh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/26/02 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Kastama, Vice Chair; Costa, Hargrove, Long, McCaslin, Poulsen, Thibaudeau and Zarelli.

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Background: The subject of trafficking of persons is receiving increasing global attention as concern grows over the need to protect people from the exploitation and violence that results from all forms of trafficking. People who are the victims of trafficking are believed to need better information regarding their options and access to services such as health care, housing, education, and legal assistance.

Information that has been collected on trafficking suggests that mail-order brides may become victims of international trafficking in women and girls. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, over 200 international matchmaking organizations operate in the United States. These organizations bring together approximately 4,000 to 6,000 couples yearly who marry and petition for immigration of the female spouse to the United States. Most of the female spouses come from the Philippines or from the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. At least three international matchmaking organizations are based in Washington State.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State task force against the trafficking of persons is created. It consists of 14 members including directors or their designees from the Office of Community Development, Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Labor and Industries, and the Commissioner of the Employment Security Department. In addition, nine members represent public and private sector organizations that provide assistance to persons who are victims of trafficking. The task force must measure and evaluate the progress of the state in trafficking prevention activities and make recommendations on methods to provide a system of support and assistance to victims of

trafficking. Findings and recommendations are reported to the Governor and Legislature by November 30, 2002.

For purposes of the Washington State Crime Victims' Compensation Program, the definition of "criminal act" includes an act committed or attempted in this state which is punishable under federal law comparable to a felony or gross misdemeanor under the laws of this state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Washington State is a lucrative market for traffickers. Many calls have been received from victims of traffickers so we know it's a significant problem here. When a person trying to assist these victims tries to get them services, agencies are found to be completely uninformed as to the problem and unsure how to help the victims. It is hoped with this bill that a coordinated system of assistance will come about for these victims of traffickers.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Velma Valoria, prime sponsor; Suzanne Brown, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs; Bev Emory, Office of Crime Victims Advocacy; Hai-Tri C, Le.