

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5086

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Judiciary, February 27, 2001

Title: An act relating to false reporting.

Brief Description: Increasing penalties for false reporting that causes a risk of substantial injury to persons or great expense to a governmental entity.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Winsley and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/26/01, 2/27/01 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Costa, Hargrove, Johnson, Kastama, Long, McCaslin and Roach.

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Background: Under current law, it is a gross misdemeanor for a person to knowingly make a false report of a fire, explosion, or crime if such person is aware that the report is likely to cause evacuation of a building or place of assembly, or cause public inconvenience or alarm. The maximum penalties for a gross misdemeanor are incarceration not to exceed one year and/or a fine not to exceed \$5,000.

Last year a woman in Florida called in a false report to the Island County Sheriff that a car with children had gone off the road. Sheriff deputies, fire fighters, EMT personnel, search and rescue personnel, and the United States Navy spent a considerable amount of time looking for the car. Island County incurred many thousands of dollars responding to this false report.

It is suggested that increased penalties for some false reports are appropriate.

Summary of Bill: The crime of false reporting in the first degree is established. The crime is committed if a person knowingly makes a false report and the person is aware that the report creates a substantial risk of death or serious physical injury or causes a government entity to incur expenses greater than \$50,000. The penalty for the crime is established as a class C felony.

The current crime of false reporting is renamed false reporting in the second degree and the language in the statute is clarified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill is necessary because new technology makes committing these types of crimes much easier and can cause incredible expenses to local and state governments. Some searches can involve hundreds of persons doing a search, and in Island County, the cost to the county was over \$75,000 to \$100,000.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Sheriff Mike Hawley, Island County.