

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6273

As of January 16, 2002

Title: An act relating to weapons at public meetings.

Brief Description: Restricting weapons at public meetings of cities, towns, and counties.

Sponsors: Senators Spanel, Haugen, Kohl-Welles, Fairley, Gardner and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 1/22/02.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Staff: Dick Armstrong (786-7460)

Background: Weapons are prohibited in restricted areas of court facilities, jails, public health facilities, and in places classified as off limits to persons under 21 years of age by the State Liquor Control Board. A weapon is defined as any firearm, explosive, instrument, or weapon listed in another statute, e.g., slung shot, sand club, metal knuckles, and various types of knives.

In court facilities, restricted areas are those used in connection with court proceedings. The areas include courtrooms, jury rooms, judges' chambers, offices and areas used to conduct court business, waiting areas and corridors adjacent to areas used in connection with court proceedings. The restricted areas must be the minimum necessary to fulfill the objective of the act, and may not include common areas of ingress and egress when it is possible to protect court areas without restricting ingress and egress to the building.

The local judicial authority must designate and clearly mark areas in court facilities where weapons are prohibited, and must post notices at each entrance to the court facility that weapons are prohibited in the restricted areas.

The local legislative authority must provide either a locked box (sufficient in size for short firearms) and key within the building, or must designate an official within the court facility to receive weapons for safekeeping, during the owner's visit to restricted areas of the court facility. The local legislative authority is liable for the loss of or damage to a weapon stored in a locked box or left with a designated official.

City and county legislative officials often discuss emotional and controversial issues during local legislative meetings. It has been suggested that weapons should be banned from all areas used in connection with local legislative meetings.

Summary of Bill: It is unlawful for a person to knowingly possess a weapon in areas of any buildings that are used for city, town, or county legislative authority meetings, including

offices of such local officials and waiting areas and corridors adjacent to such meeting areas. Any restrictions on waiting areas or corridors are to be the minimum necessary.

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A person who possesses a weapon in a restricted area is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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