

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6407

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Judiciary, February 7, 2002

Title: An act relating to the trafficking of persons.

Brief Description: Addressing the trafficking of persons.

Sponsors: Senators Costa, Kohl-Welles, Kline, Kastama and Thibaudeau.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 1/29/02, 2/7/02 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6407 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Kastama, Vice Chair; Costa, Hargrove, Johnson, Long, McCaslin, Poulsen, Roach, 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 Substitute 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: For purposes of the Washington State Crime Victims' Compensation Program, the definition of "criminal act" is clarified to mean an act punishable under federal law comparable to a felony or gross misdemeanor under the laws of this state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2002.

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

Testimony For: This bill is about human rights and human dignity. It's about providing assistance to victims, some of whom cannot even speak English in order to ask for help. There are economic reasons why women are willing to pay money to marry an American man met through a mail order bride service. They hope to better themselves economically as most come from situations where there is little chance of an improved life. Only trafficking in guns and drugs brings more money into the U.S. This bill will give us the impetus to look at the trafficking in persons problem. This modern day slavery needs to end.

Testimony Against: None

Testified: PRO: Senator Jeri Costa; Representative Velma Valoria; Helen Clemente; Suzanne Brown, WA Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs; Bev Emory, Office of Crime Victims Advocacy; Emma Catague, Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center.