

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2064

As Passed House:

March 13, 2003

Title: An act relating to a military facilities task force.

Brief Description: Studying methods of avoiding military base closure.

Sponsors: By Representatives Woods, Rockefeller, Bush, Lantz, Ahern, Hankins, Benson, Haigh, Sehlin, Morris, Bailey, Wood, Talcott, Ericksen, Edwards and Carrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 3/3/03, 3/4/03 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/13/03, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Requires the Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs to conduct a Washington military facilities study and make recommendations to the Governor and the state Legislature on actions needed to ensure the operational viability of these facilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Shabro, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Nixon, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The 2002 National Defense Authorization Act requires that a fifth round of military base closings begin in March 2005. There have been four rounds of military base closings since 1988 with 451 installations closed to date. There are seven major military bases located in Washington, including:

- McChord Air Force Base;
- Fairchild Air Force Base;
- Whidbey Island Naval Air Station;
- Fort Lewis;
- Bangor Naval Shipyard;
- Bremerton Naval Shipyard; and
- Everett Naval Station;

The Base Closure Process:

By February 2004 the Secretary of Defense (Secretary) must determine the number and type of military facilities needed to support the force-structure plan required to meet the threats to national security over the next 20 years. The base closing process will proceed only if the Secretary certifies that additional closures are warranted. If base closures are desired, the President will appoint a nine-member Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (Commission) to convene in March 2005 to vote on the list of base closures provided by the Secretary. The Commission will submit a final list of military bases to be closed or scaled back, to the President by September 2005. The President and Congress each have to accept or reject the list as is.

As in previous base closure rounds, military value continues to be the primary criteria used to select military facilities for closure. However, for the 2005 base closure round, Congress has changed the definition of military value. The new definition emphasizes preserving military facilities as staging areas for homeland defense missions, as well as guaranteeing the present and future availability of sufficient air, ground, and sea training areas that are diverse in climate and terrain. Other criteria will be considered, such as the economic impact on existing communities in the vicinity of the military facility.

In a change from previous rounds, the privatization and economic redevelopment of a base selected for closure may only occur if the Commission recommends privatization as a method of closure for that specific facility.

Privatization of Military Base Support Services:

Military base infrastructure costs are being reduced through Department of Defense programs that outsource and privatize base support services and activities. Examples include the military housing privatization initiative, and the privatization of the on-base portion of military utility systems.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs (Joint Committee) will conduct a study of Washington military facilities to determine and coordinate efforts needed to

ensure these facilities retain their premier status with respect to their national defense missions. In conducting the study, the Joint Committee will:

- obtain an understanding of the mission of each military facility;
- examine the integral role of Washington facilities within the national defense structure;
- identify obstacles to the mission of each facility;
- examine laws, ordinances, requirements, rules, or regulations that impact each facility's mission;
- evaluate locally developed proposals intended to mitigate impact of military facilities on surrounding areas or the impact of nonmilitary activities in surrounding areas on the mission of military facilities; and
- study the economic impacts of the facilities on the Washington economy.

The Joint Committee will make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on actions needed to ensure the viability of military facilities, including:

- appropriate expenditures to ensure proper functioning and continued operation of military facilities within the state;
- required changes to laws, local ordinances, zoning requirements, rules, or regulations; and
- required federal actions.

As part of the study, the Joint Committee will invite participation and input from experts and will consult with representatives and non-elected community leaders of each county and city containing a major military facility, and the military authorities of each military base in the state.

The study will commence immediately after completion of the legislative session and will continue until such time as the consensus of committee membership is to conclude.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: There needs to be a local effort to make presentations to Congress on the value of our bases. If any of our bases are closed, the financial impact on our communities will be devastating. Washington was spared in the last round of base closures, and our bases are very much at risk next time. The top employers in Pierce County are Fort Lewis and McChord. Encroachment is one of the issues looked at in

base closure actions. California and Florida have passed growth management laws to protect their bases. Any comprehensive plan should consider encroachment on our military bases.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Haigh; Tom Brandt; and Gary Brackett, Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce.