

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2661

As Reported by House Committee On:
Criminal Justice & Corrections

Title: An act relating to a web site for information on fugitives.

Brief Description: Creating a web site for information on fugitives.

Sponsors: Representatives Simpson, G., Newhouse, Anderson, Chase and Miloscia.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/28/04, 2/4/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Corrections (DOC) to post a list of escapees, considered high risk offenders, on the department's web site.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives O'Brien, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Mielke, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kagi, Pearson and Veloria.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

A community custody violator is generally defined as a fugitive or escapee on community custody status who continues to make his or her self unavailable to the DOC for supervision. Offenders of this type willfully make their whereabouts unknown or fail to maintain contact with the DOC as directed by their community corrections officer. A community custody violator is guilty of a class C felony offense.

On November 4, 2003, for a six-month trial period, the King County Journal began publishing a weekly list of fugitives wanted by the DOC. The King County Journal, along with help from the DOC, publishes the names, photographs, and brief descriptions

of six fugitives wanted by the state Department of Corrections Fugitive Apprehension Team. The fugitives all are convicted felons who have escaped the DOC's community supervision.

Besides the six-month pilot program with the King County Journal, the DOC does not post information about offenders on its web site nor does the department have a web site link to information or photographs about offender escapees.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DOC must, within available resources, post a list of persons deemed escapees on its web site. The DOC must focus the web site on those escapees and fugitives considered high risk offenders who have failed to maintain contact with the DOC as directed by their community corrections officer. A report on the progress of the website must be submitted to the Legislature by December 31, 2004.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The DOC is only required to publish a list of fugitives considered high risk to the community instead of a list of all fugitives. In addition, the DOC is authorized to only establish the web site list within available funding and report to the Legislature on the progress of the web site by December 31, 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill was actually suggested by a local constituent who saw that the King County Journal was publishing a list of fugitives and thought it might be a good idea for the entire state. This bill will allow people around the state to have information on the DOC's fugitives which may help to bring many of them back into compliance with the terms of their release.

The DOC fiscal note can be reduced if the bill stated that the DOC only had to focus on high risk offenders. This would decrease the workload associated with maintaining the website which would otherwise include over 18,000 offenders. In addition, one-half of the cost of the fiscal note is due to having a 24-hour, seven day a week phone line. If the phone line is eliminated than the costs of the bill could also be reduced. The start-up web site costs cannot be eliminated.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative G. Simpson, prime sponsor; and Eldon Vail, Department of Corrections.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.