

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2661

As Passed House:
February 16, 2004

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

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

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/28/04, 2/4/04 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/6/04, 2/9/04 [DP2S(w/o sub CJC)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/16/04, 93-0.

Brief Summary of 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).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Criminal Justice & Corrections. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Anderson, Boldt, Buck, Chandler, Clements, Cody, Conway, Cox, Dunshee, Grant, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDonald, McIntire, Miloscia, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Sump and Talcott.

Staff: Bernard Dean (786-7130).

Background:

An inmate in community custody who willfully absconds from supervision and who makes his or her whereabouts unknown by failing to make contact with the Department of Corrections is generally deemed an escapee and a fugitive from justice. Upon conviction, these fugitives are guilty of a class C felony offense under the state's criminal code.

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 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill. New fiscal note requested on February 5, 2004.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Criminal Justice & Corrections) 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 For: (Appropriations) None.

Testimony Against: (Criminal Justice & Corrections) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Persons Testifying: (Criminal Justice & Corrections) Representative G. Simpson, prime sponsor; and Eldon Vail, Department of Corrections.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Criminal Justice & Corrections) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.