

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5201

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 4, 2003

Title: An act relating to the volunteer amateur radio emergency communications act.

Brief Description: Enacting the volunteer amateur radio emergency communications act.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Horn, Swecker, Esser and Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/17/03, 3/4/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5201 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Stevens, Vice Chair; Horn, Kastama, McCaslin and Reardon.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: Private citizens who pursue the hobby of amateur (ham) radio have volunteered through the Amateur Radio Relay League to meet the communications needs of state and local governments in times of emergency. This volunteer effort is an official component of state and local emergency management plans.

All ham radio equipment and antennas are privately owned. Some areas of the state are without ham radio coverage. In times of emergency, when governmental and commercial communications are overloaded or otherwise disabled, these areas without ham radio coverage are unable to communicate with the rest of the state.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A six-member work group is established to study regulation of ham radio antenna height in urban areas; credentials for emergency workers; and the encouragement of expansion of the ham radio network so that the whole state has emergency radio coverage.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill's goal of having complete back-up emergency communication coverage for the entire state is made the subject of the study. The specific subsidiary issues of antenna heights and emergency worker credentials are included in the study.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This is a part of the broader issue of emergency preparedness that is the subject of a study to be done by EMS with results this summer.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Sophia Byrd, WA State Assn. of Counties (pro w/concerns).