

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1136

As Reported by House Committee On:
Criminal Justice & Corrections

Title: An act relating to studying electronic monitoring as an alternative to incarceration.

Brief Description: Ordering a study of electronic monitoring systems.

Sponsors: Representatives O'Brien, Darneille, Kirby, Miloscia, Lovick and Chase.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/27/05, 2/3/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) to conduct a study on the electronic monitoring programs used in every state.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives O'Brien, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kagi, Kirby and Strow.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

A range of terminology is used when describing electronic supervision. One of the most frequently used terms is electronic monitoring, which is generally associated with technologies that determine whether an offender is at home (or other location) as stipulated by his or her condition of supervision. Other terms that are frequently used when referring to electronic monitoring include electronic bracelets, home detention, home arrest, and home confinement.

The electronic monitoring program uses electronic equipment to monitor a person's presence at a particular location from a remote location. It works like a cordless phone. During specified times, one has to be at the location where the monitor sends a signal to the base. The base connects over a modem to a remote station and delivers data of the offender's whereabouts. It is a device of a size of a regular pager. A rubber strip (with a metal cord inside) attaches the monitor to the person's leg. If that person steps outside of the monitored range an alarm or other signal can go off.

Electronic monitoring is often used by the courts as well as local and state correctional entities to ensure an offender's compliance with a condition or requirement of a sentence. Offenders can be charged a fee for this special service (alternative to incarceration sentence) of electronic monitoring to help offset the cost of supervision.

Summary of Bill:

The WASPC must conduct a study on electronic monitoring in every state. The study must analyze each state's activity regarding electronic monitoring and must review the following issues:

- how often electronic monitoring is used;
- a description of laws and circumstances of when an offender is placed on electronic monitoring;
- the discovery and analysis of specific programs used to promote electronic monitoring and how they are operated;
- the type of electronic monitoring technology used;
- an evaluation of offender pay programs and the amount of money recovered from these programs;
- overall perceptions of electronic monitoring from the criminal justice community, and any real or perceived problems or concerns with electronic monitoring; and
- any estimates on savings realized by utilizing electronic monitoring.

The WASPC must place its findings and recommendations into a final report and present it to the Legislature by no later than December 31, 2005.

The act expires December 31, 2005.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This is an effort to find a more economical way of supervising nonviolent offenders in the community rather than incarcerating them in jail or prison. Many counties are already using electronic incarceration with great success.

About 15 years ago the WASPC developed an electronic monitoring system throughout the state. Since that time the technology has grown. Technology has improved so much so that policymakers are starting to think it is a good idea to increase its use. In Washington the use of electronic monitoring has been stagnant, however throughout the rest of the country the growth is increasing. In the State of Michigan, they have nearly 30,000 offenders on electronic monitoring at any given time. The intent of this bill is to study what other states are

doing, to determine what technology they are using, how much they are using electronic monitoring technology, and to see what ideas we can use to increase technology in Washington.

The biggest violators of the program are juveniles, however home monitoring for adults has been very successful and violations for adults are very rare.

Sheriffs and police chiefs throughout the state support this bill. The majority of county jails throughout the state are overcrowded and utilizing more electronic monitoring could save taxpayers money and could open up beds in many of the jails.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative O'Brien, prime sponsor; Tim Schellberg, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Larry Taylor, Benton County Sheriff; and Lin Miller, Department of Corrections.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.