

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5887

As of February 21, 2005

Title: An act relating to a pilot program on interoperable communication systems.

Brief Description: Establishing a local government interoperability pilot program.

Sponsors: Senators Kastama, McCaslin, Delvin, Rasmussen, Schoesler and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/21/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Cindy Fazio (786-7405)

Background: The State Interoperability Executive Committee, created in 2003, was directed to take inventory of and evaluate all state and local government-owner public safety communications systems, and prepare a statewide public safety communication plan. The plan was to set forth recommendations for executive and legislative action to insure that public safety communication's systems can communicate with one another and conform to federal law and regulations governing emergency communication systems and spectrum allocation. The plan was to include specific goals for improving interoperability of public safety communication's systems and identifiable benchmarks for achieving those goals.

Summary of Bill: A pilot program is established to demonstrate to local governments throughout the state of Washington the value of implementing the pending interoperability standards being established by the committee. The pilot program is limited to one county public safety agency.

In order to be eligible for the program, a county must first enact, by the vote of the people, no later than July 1, 2006, a countywide measure to fund public safety communication equipment. The measure must raise a minimum of five million dollars.

Also by July 1, 2006, the county must be awarded, or prove that an award is pending, from a federal grant program specifically for the purpose of implementing an interoperable communication system. The grant must be for a minimum of five million dollars.

When these two requirements are met, the State Interoperability Executive Committee, on or before July 1, 2006, must award to the county, a five million dollar grant. The county public safety agency must also agree to meet certain technical requirements for any equipment purchases, and to comply with all communication's standards adopted by the State Interoperability Executive Committee.

If the pilot program is not funded by the state appropriation, or if a federal grant is not procured, the pilot program is null and void.

Appropriation: Five million dollars by July 1, 2006.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The state has taken on the project of improving communication interoperability but most of that will eventually be implemented at the local level, so it is important to motivate the counties to get involved. A project like this is one way of providing that motivation. A project like this needs multiple partners to be effective. Similar projects in King County have been effective, but all those projects were a coalition of entities.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Tim Schellberg, Motorola; Sophia Byrd, Association of Counties; Kevin Kearns, King County and Association of Counties.