

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6055

As of March 2, 2005

Title: An act relating to a commission on psychoactive substance control.

Brief Description: Establishing a commission on psychoactive substance control.

Sponsors: Senator Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 3/2/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Background: For the last three years, a coalition of professional and civic groups, established by the King County Bar Association, has been investigating and analyzing the problems arising from the sale and use of prohibited psychoactive substances. This coalition has been developing the parameters of an alternative legal framework for drug control. Proponents of this legislation point to research that has shown criminal processing and incarceration of non-violent drug offenders has been counterproductive to the goal of reducing drug use.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature intends to create a special consultative body to provide recommendations for legislative action to establish a state-level system of regulatory control of psychoactive substances that are currently produced and distributed exclusively in illegal markets. The intent of the Legislature is to make the illegal markets for such psychoactive substances unprofitable, restrict access to these substances, and provide health care and essential services to persons suffering from chemical dependency and addiction.

A Governor's commission on psychoactive substance control is created and the organizations which will recommend a representative to be appointed as a member are specified. In addition, four members of the Legislature are members of the commission; two members of the Senate, one from each party, and two members of the House of Representatives, one from each party. The Governor's commission on psychoactive substance control is charged with providing specific recommendations for legislation to establish regulatory systems and structures to control psychoactive substances currently produced and distributed exclusively through illegal markets. Specific issues that are required to be addressed are delineated. The commission is directed to report its recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2006.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Testimony For: We need to throw out the assumption that the way we're dealing with the drug problem is the best way. Drug treatment, prevention of addiction, and safety for those who have drug problems should be our goals. Fifteen professional and civic organizations have been examining the way our society deals with psychoactive substances. We need to reduce crime, protect children, and wisely use scarce public resources. Our drug policies rely heavily on criminal law. The prohibition approach drives drugs underground to the black market which causes prices to increase and people to turn to crime to get the money to buy the drugs. Under this bill, the criminal justice system would still be involved. In countries that have tried some of these ideas, drug use has gone down. Under the policies in this bill, psychoactive substances would be standardized and controlled.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: June G. Bredin, M.D., Washington Academy of Family Physicians; Dick Monroe, King County Bar Association; Bill Shaw, M.D., Washington Society of Addiction Medicine, King Co. Bar Drug Policy Project Steering Committee.

CON: No one.