

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6308

As Passed Senate, February 13, 2006

Title: An act relating to creating a joint select committee on offenders programs, sentencing, and supervision.

Brief Description: Creating a joint select committee on offenders programs, sentencing, and supervision.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Carrell, Stevens, Regala, Schoesler, Schmidt, Oke and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/24/06, 2/1/06 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 2/13/06, 44-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6308 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell and McAuliffe.

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: In recent years, Washington legislators have recognized the need to address programs that prepare offenders for successful reentry into society while keeping communities safe. Current laws authorize earned release time for good behavior, as well as mandatory education and work programs for offenders. The Legislature has also directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to conduct several studies on the efficacy of offender programs and policies on reducing recidivism rates.

Evidence-Based Adult Corrections Programs: In January 2006, the WSIPP released a report after reviewing 291 evaluations of individual adult corrections programs. The WSIPP was able to identify those adult corrections programs that have a demonstrated ability to reduce recidivism rates and those that did not. The report suggests that corrections policy may be shaped to focus resources on effective evidence-based programming and avoid those that have been identified as ineffective. The final version of the WSIPP's report is to be delivered October 2006 and will present full benefit-cost estimates for each of the programs evaluated.

Options to Stabilize Prison Populations in Washington: Also in January 2006, the WSIPP released its interim report in response to the 2005 Legislature's request to identify options that cost-effectively reduce the need for future prison capacity. The report will examine three broad categories of policy options including sentencing options, prevention programs, and intervention programs. The final report is due October 2006.

Both of the WSIPP reports referenced here are available on the WSIPP website at: <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov>

Summary of Bill: A joint committee is created to review offender programs, sentencing, and supervision of the offenders upon reentry into the community, with the stated goal of increasing public safety, maximizing rehabilitation of the offenders, and lowering recidivism. The committee must review and make recommendations regarding the type of offender that would most benefit from training and education; the type of education and training that would be most beneficial; changes to the sentencing law and policies that recognize "good time" served; changes to the supervision of offenders once released into the community; and methods for evaluating the effectiveness of these programs.

A report must be presented to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature by November 15, 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: This is a great idea and is long overdue. Support was expressed for the broad variety of stakeholders included on the committee. Transformation of the current system is badly needed and HB 2010 from 1995 needs to be revisited. Studies show that three out of five offenders will re-offend after release and some federal studies suggest that this number is as high as two out of three. Programs that give offenders skills and support systems have proven successful in reducing recidivism. Crime victims also support programs that can put offenders back into community as a productive member of society.

Suggestions for additional membership include the Secretary of the Department of Corrections, two faculty members who provide services to offenders, community educators, community corrections officer, housing representatives and an ex-offender. Recidivism should also be a stated goal of the committee.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Joseph Garcia, Tom Watkins and Jim Pooley, AFT Washington; Sandra Schroeder and Kathy Goebel, State Board of Community & Technical Colleges; Claudia Sorum, South Seattle CC Corrections Program; Dave Johnson, Washington Coalition of Crime Victims' Advocates; Lee Hinebaugh, TRRL; Chief Larry Saunders, WASPC; Ruben Ceden, DOC; Dennis Eagle and Ginger Richardson, WA Federation of State Employees; Roger Kluck, Friends Committee on WA Public Policy.

House Amendment(s): Technical changes are made to the statutory language to coincide with Office of Program Research protocol for the establishment of legislative task forces. The name of the work group is changed from a "joint select" committee to a "joint legislative task force" and non-governmental agencies are to be consulted as needed rather than appointed as members.

The task force is additionally required to study work release programs and how they are sited throughout the state.