

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6477

As of February 01, 2006

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

Brief Description: Creating a work group to study volunteer amateur radio emergency communications.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Benson, Stevens, Benton, Johnson, Esser and Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/2/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: The emergency management division of the state military department administers emergency management and disaster relief programs. The director of the military department is appointed by the Governor and is charged with developing and maintaining a comprehensive emergency management plan for the state. Local jurisdictions are directed to establish comprehensive local emergency management plans and to submit their plans to the director for recommendations. Local jurisdictions may also establish and operate joint local emergency management organizations.

The emergency management council, whose members include representatives of city and county governments, law enforcement, fire chiefs, emergency management directors, and medical professions, advises the Governor and the director on matters pertaining to state and local emergency management. The council studied local and tribal emergency management organizations and issued a report in July, 2005, on statewide emergency preparedness.

Private citizens who own and operate amateur radio or "ham" equipment also are able to communicate during times of disaster. Ham operators use segments of the radio wave spectrum allotted to them by the Federal Communication Commission. Their hobby requires federal licensure and private purchase of transmission and reception facilities that are operated with electricity.

Summary of Bill: To further the public purpose of encouraging the expansion of the ham radio network, a work group is convened. The work group consists of six members appointed as follows: three representatives of the ham radio community, two appointed by the chair of the senate government operations and elections committee and one appointed by the ranking minority member of that committee; three members appointed by the Adjutant General to represent urban planning, rural planning, and state emergency management department.

The work group is staffed by the military department. The work group shall submit a written report to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2006. The report must include

recommendations for regulating ham radio antenna heights in urban areas; credentials for qualified emergency workers; and encouragement of expansion of the ham radio network so that no inhabited area is without emergency communication links.

Appropriation: Up to \$500 from the general fund for reimbursing the expenses of the private citizens who serve on the work group as representatives of the ham radio community.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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