

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5202

As Reported by House Committee On:
Judiciary

Title: An act relating to permissible weaponry for on-duty law enforcement officers.

Brief Description: Concerning permissible weaponry for on-duty law enforcement officers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senators Delvin, Eide, Hewitt, Brandland, Pridemore, Holmquist, McCaslin, Haugen, Jacobsen, Honeyford, Rasmussen and Roach).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 3/28/07, 3/30/07 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Police officers are exempted from the prohibition against possessing a spring blade knife if the possession is while the officer is on official duty or is transporting the knife to and from storage or while the knife is in storage.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Lantz, Chair; Goodman, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Flannigan, Kirby, Moeller, Pedersen, Ross and Williams.

Staff: Bill Perry (786-7123).

Background:

There is a general prohibition against manufacturing, selling, or possessing certain weapons, including:

- slung shots;
- sand clubs;
- metal knuckles;

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- spring blade knives;
- knives with blades that are automatically released by a spring or other mechanism; or
- knives with blades that open by the force of gravity or by a downward or outward movement of the knife.

It is a gross misdemeanor to violate this prohibition.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The prohibition on the possession of certain weapons does not apply to a police officer who possesses a spring blade knife while on duty or while transporting the knife to or from storage. The prohibition also does not apply to the storage of the knife by a police officer.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The amendment clarifies that the exception to the prohibition on possessing certain weapons applies only to an officer's possession of a spring blade knife, not to possession of other types of prohibited weapons.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is an important bill for law enforcement officers. Having a knife that can be opened quickly and with one hand can be important in emergency situations such as a car wreck when a seat belt needs to be cut. Bomb squad members also often need these knives for disarming explosives. While the knives are primarily used as tools, they can become a weapon of last resort if an officer is otherwise disarmed.

Federal officers have been allowed to carry these knives for years and many other states allow it as well. Officers in this state have assumed it was permissible for them to do so for years.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Delvin, prime sponsor; Bill Hanson, Washington Fraternal Order of Police; and Phil Watkins, City of Kennewick.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.