

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 2712

C 276 L 08

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning criminal street gangs.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Hurst, Ross, Dickerson, Newhouse, Conway, Morrell, Roach, Kelley and Ormsby).

House Committee on Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Work Group on Gang-Related Crime.

In 2007 legislation was enacted that required the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) to establish a work group to evaluate the problem of gang-related crime in Washington. The work group included members from both the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as representatives from the following groups: the Office of the Attorney General, local law enforcement, prosecutors and municipal attorneys, criminal defense attorneys, court administrators, prison administrators and probation officers, and experts in gang and delinquency prevention.

The work group was charged with evaluating and making recommendations regarding additional legislative measures to combat gang-related crime, the creation of a statewide gang information database, possible reforms to the juvenile justice system for gang-related juvenile offenses, best practices for prevention and intervention of youth gang membership, and the adoption of legislation authorizing civil anti-gang injunctions. The WASPC and the work group met monthly during the 2007 interim and on December 11, 2007, provided a report to the Legislature on its findings and recommendations regarding criminal gang activity.

Sentencing.

A variety of statutory provisions exist with respect to criminal gang activity. For example, a person is guilty of Criminal Gang Intimidation if he or she threatens another person because that person refused to join a gang. Criminal Gang Intimidation is a seriousness level III, class C felony offense.

Aggravating Factors. The standard sentencing range is presumed to be appropriate for the typical felony case. However, the law provides that in exceptional cases, a court has the discretion to depart from the standard range and may impose an exceptional sentence below the standard range (with a mitigating circumstance) or above the range (with an aggravating circumstance). The Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) provides a list of factors that a court may

consider in deciding whether to impose an exceptional sentence outside the standard range. Some of the aggravating factors provided by the SRA include: behavior that manifested deliberate cruelty to a victim; vulnerability of a victim; sexual motivation on the part of the defendant; and an ongoing pattern of multiple incidents of abuse to a victim.

Community Custody. The term "community custody" refers to the period following release from total confinement in which an offender is supervised by the Department of Corrections (DOC). Community custody is that portion of an offender's sentence served in the community, subject to conditions imposed by the sentencing court and the DOC. An offender may be sanctioned administratively by the DOC for violating his or her conditions of release.

Certain crimes, including sex offenses not qualifying for determinate-plus sentencing, serious violent offenses, crimes against a person, and some drug offenses carry a mandatory term of community custody. Unless waived by the court, certain mandatory conditions are required to be included in the term of community custody. Special conditions, such as crime related prohibitions, may also be included. The DOC assesses an offender's risk of reoffense and may modify or impose conditions of community custody in addition to those imposed by the court, provided they do not contravene or decrease the court's order. For example, the DOC may require an offender to participate in rehabilitative programs or perform affirmative conduct according to the offender's risk of reoffense.

Malicious Mischief. A person is guilty of Malicious Mischief in the first degree if he or she knowingly and maliciously causes physical damage to the property of another in an amount exceeding \$1,500. Malicious Mischief in the first degree is a seriousness level II, class B felony offense. Malicious Mischief in the second degree occurs if the damage exceeds \$250. Malicious Mischief in the second degree is a seriousness level I, class C felony offense. Malicious Mischief in the third degree is a gross misdemeanor offense if the damage to the property exceeds \$50. It is a misdemeanor offense if the damage to the property is less than \$50. Generally, cases involving graffiti or tagging are charged as misdemeanor Malicious Mischief in the third degree offenses.

When a defendant is prosecuted in a criminal action for a misdemeanor offense, for which the person injured by the act constituting the offense has a remedy by a civil action, the offense may be compromised in certain specified instances. In these cases, if the party injured appears in court, at any time before the final judgment, and acknowledges in writing that he or she has received satisfaction for the injury, the court may order all proceedings to be discontinued and the defendant to be discharged.

Civil Penalties. Criminal and civil penalties may be imposed for certain offenses such as shoplifting and related thefts of property or services. The special civil penalties apply to shoplifting and theft of restaurant or lodging services. In addition to actual damages, which include the value of services or property taken, certain penalties and costs may be recovered by a merchant from the person taking the goods or services. If the defendant is an adult or emancipated minor, those additional penalties and costs include:

- the retail value of the goods or services, to a maximum of \$1,000;
- a penalty of at least \$100 but not more than \$200; and

- reasonable attorneys' fees and court costs.

Vicarious liability is also imposed on the parent of an unemancipated minor who steals such goods or services. However, in the case of parental liability, the additional "retail value" penalty maximum of \$1,000 is reduced to \$500.

Claims, as well as judgments, may be assigned by a merchant who has suffered the theft of goods or services. Pursuit of these civil remedies by a merchant is independent of whether criminal charges are filed or prosecuted.

If a merchant gets a civil judgment under these provisions, that judgment may be assigned to another party for collection. Collection of the judgment debt may be accomplished through a debt collection agency. However, a claim that has not been reduced to a judgment cannot be assigned.

Database.

The Washington State Patrol uses an internal information-sharing database to aid law enforcement and criminal justice entities in identifying, disrupting, and preventing terrorist and criminal activities. The database assists local law enforcement agencies in coordinating efforts against criminal networks that operate in many locations across jurisdictional lines. Typical activities found in the database center around drug trafficking, terrorism, violent crime, cybercrime, and organized criminal activities occurring in the state.

Summary:

Sentencing.

The crime of Involving a Juvenile in a Felony Offense is created. It occurs when an adult gang member, convicted of a felony, has compensated, threatened, or solicited a minor in order to involve that minor in the commission of the underlying felony offense. A prosecutor may file a special allegation that the felony committed involved the compensation, threatening, or solicitation of a juvenile in the commission of the felony offense. The penalty for the underlying offense is calculated by multiplying the standard sentencing range for the completed offense by 125 percent. If the new calculated standard sentence range exceeds the statutory maximum sentence for the offense, the statutory maximum sentence is the presumptive sentence unless the offender is a persistent offender.

Aggravating Factors. The list of aggravating factors in the Sentencing Reform Act is expanded to include any crime that is intentionally committed directly or indirectly for the benefit, aggrandizement, gain, profit, advantage, reputation, membership, or influence of a gang.

Community Custody. In the instance of a gang member convicted of an offense involving the unlawful possession of a firearm, the court must sentence the offender to a term of community custody.

Malicious Mischief. A new crime called "Criminal Street Gang Tagging and Graffiti" is created. A person is guilty of Criminal Street Gang Tagging and Graffiti if he or she commits

Malicious Mischief in the third degree and he or she has multiple current or prior convictions for Malicious Mischief in the third degree offenses.

When a defendant is prosecuted in a criminal action for a misdemeanor offense, other than a violation of a Criminal Street Gang Tagging and Graffiti offense, for which the person injured by the act constituting the offense has a remedy by a civil action, the offense may be compromised.

Civil Penalties. The same special civil penalties imposed for shoplifting and related thefts of property or services are created for offenses involving Criminal Street Gang Tagging and Graffiti. In addition to actual damages to the property, penalties and costs may be recovered by the property owner from the person causing the physical damage to the property. If the defendant is an adult or emancipated minor, those additional penalties and costs include: the value of the damaged property, to a maximum of \$1,000; a penalty of at least \$100, but not more than \$200; and reasonable attorneys' fees and court costs.

Definitions. The following terms are defined:

"Criminal street gang" is defined as any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, having as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal acts, and whose members or associates individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal street gang activity.

"Criminal street gang associate or member" is defined as any person who actively participates in any criminal street gang and who intentionally promotes, furthers, or assists in any criminal act by a criminal street gang.

"Criminal street gang-related offense" is defined as the conviction of any felony or misdemeanor offense, whether in Washington or elsewhere, that is committed with intent for one or more of the following reasons:

- for the benefit of or at the direction of any criminal street gang, with the intent to gain admission or promotion within the gang or with the intent to promote, further, or assist in any criminal act by the gang;
- to increase or maintain the gang's size, membership, prestige, dominance, or control in any geographical area;
- to exact revenge or retribution for the gang or any member of the gang;
- to obstruct justice, or intimidate or eliminate any witness against the gang or any member of the gang;
- to directly or indirectly cause any benefit, aggrandizement, gain, profit, or other advantage for the gang, its reputation, influence, or membership; or
- to provide the gang with any advantage in, or any control or dominance over any criminal market sector, including, but not limited to, manufacturing, delivering, or selling any controlled substance; arson; trafficking in stolen property; promoting prostitution; human trafficking; or promoting pornography.

"Pattern of criminal street gang activity" is:

- any attempt, commission, or conspiracy to commit two or more of the following criminal street gang-related offenses: a serious violent felony offense (excluding Homicide by Abuse and Assault of a Child I), a violent offense (excluding Assault of a Child II), delivering or possessing with intent to deliver a controlled substance, any violation of the Firearms and Dangerous Weapon Act, Theft of a Firearm, Possession of a Stolen Firearm, Malicious Harassment, Harassment where a subsequent violation or deadly threat is made, Criminal Gang Intimidation, Involving a Juvenile in a Criminal Offense, Residential Burglary, Burglary II, Malicious Mischief I and II, Theft of a Motor Vehicle, Possession of a Stolen Motor Vehicle, Taking a Motor Vehicle Without Permission I and II, Extortion I and II, Intimidating a Witness, Tampering with a Witness, Reckless Endangerment, Coercion, Harassment, or Malicious Mischief III;
- where the conviction for at least one of the offenses listed above must have occurred after July 1, 2008;
- the offender's current conviction for the most recent committed offense must have occurred within three years of his or her prior offense; and
- of any of the offenses that were committed, the offenses must have occurred on separate occasions or by two or more persons.

The definitions of "criminal street gang," "criminal street gang associate or member," "criminal street gang-related offense," and "pattern of criminal street gang activity" preempts any conflicting city or county codes ordinances. Cities, towns, counties, or other municipalities may only enact laws and ordinances relating to criminal street gangs that contain definitions that are consistent with definitions in state law.

Database.

The WASPC must work with the WSP to expand the use of an existing statewide database accessible by law enforcement agencies to include criminal street gang data.

The database must provide an Internet-based multi-agency, multi-location, information sharing application. Information in the gang database must be available to all local, state, and federal general authority law enforcement agencies, the DOC, and the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, solely for gang enforcement and for tracking gangs, gang members, and gang incidents. Information in the database is not available for public use and is prohibited from being used in any criminal or civil proceeding.

Information about specific individuals in the database must be automatically expunged every five years if: (1) no new or updated information has been entered into the database within the previous five years; (2) there are no pending criminal charges against such person in any court; (3) the person has not been convicted of a new crime; and (4) it has been five years since the person completed his or her term of confinement. Information entered into the database may only include data on gang members that are 12 years or older.

Each law enforcement and criminal justice agency using the database is required to ensure that all users of the database receive training on the use of the database before granting the users access to the database.

Grants.

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs' Gang Grant Program. The WASPC must establish a gang grant program available to local law enforcement agencies with the goal of targeting gang crime. Grant applicants are encouraged to utilize multi-jurisdictional efforts and each applicant must show, within its jurisdiction, that:

- a significant gang problem exists;
- grants awarded would be sufficient to cover investigation, prosecution, and jail costs;
- an enforcement program has been designed that best addresses the specific gang problem in the jurisdiction;
- data will be collected to evaluate the performance of the program;
- the enforcement program being proposed in the application would specifically suit its gang problem; and
- there is community coordination focusing on prevention, intervention, and suppression of gang activity.

Grant applications must be reviewed and awarded through peer review panels. No more than the greater of 4 percent or \$60,000 of the appropriated funding may be used for administering the grants.

Graffiti and Tagging Abatement Grant. The WASPC must establish a gang grant program to assist local law enforcement agencies in funding local graffiti and tagging abatement programs. Grant applicants are encouraged to utilize multi-jurisdictional efforts and each applicant must:

- demonstrate that a significant gang problem exists within the community;
- show how the funds awarded will be used to dispose or eliminate any current or ongoing tagging or graffiti in the community;
- show how the funds will reduce future graffiti and tagging within the community;
- show how data will be collected to evaluate the performance of the program; and
- show how the local citizens and business owners will benefit from the proposed graffiti or tagging abatement process being presented in the application.

The cost of administrating the program must not exceed the greater of 4 percent or \$25,000 of the appropriated funding.

Witness Relocation Program.

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) must, subject to available funds, establish a temporary witness assistance grant program for witnesses of felony gang-related offenses. The DCTED must work with each local prosecuting attorney to determine how funding is to be provided to reimburse county prosecutors for providing assistance to witnesses. The DCTED must distribute agency pre-approved witness assistance grant funds to county prosecuting attorneys on a quarterly basis. Grants are limited to \$5,000 per witness or for up to a three month period.

The DOC's Study to Reduce Gang Involvement.

The DOC is required to study the best practices to reduce gang involvement and recruitment among its incarcerated offenders. The study and recommendations must include intervention

and successful re-entry programs for gang members seeking to opt-out of gangs. Such programs may include, but are not limited to, tattoo removal, anger management, and obtaining a GED. The DOC must provide a report on its findings to the Legislature by January 1, 2009.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	94	1	
Senate	46	3	(Senate amended)
House	92	2	(House concurred)

Effective: June 12, 2008