

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5244

As of February 7, 2011

Title: An act relating to law enforcement crime prevention efforts regarding security alarm systems and crime watch programs for residential and commercial locations.

Brief Description: Addressing law enforcement crime prevention efforts regarding security alarm systems and crime watch programs for residential and commercial locations.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, Nelson and Delvin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/07/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: The Public Records Act (PRA) requires that all state and local government agencies make all public records available for public inspection and copying unless they fall within certain statutory exemptions. The provisions requiring public records disclosure must be interpreted liberally while the exemptions are interpreted narrowly to effectuate the general policy favoring disclosure.

Summary of Bill: Information regarding local security alarm system ordinances or programs and vacation crime watch programs collected by law enforcement agencies is exempt from disclosure. However, the exemption does not prohibit the legal owner of a residence or business from accessing information pertinent to his or her residence or business.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill has been brought forward as an effort to be proactive as law enforcement engage in investigations. We are trying to protect information that could cause a public safety issue if it is revealed. The ordinance in question in the bill creates the program information that we are seeking to protect, not the ordinance itself. The information in this program contains a person's name, address, that you have an alarm, and what type of alarm you have. If a person submits a public record request, they could get access to that information. The Home Watch program requires a person to fill out a form of where they live, when they will be gone, and who has access to their home. Again, that information should be protected. There should be an amendment to the bill to clarify that the information that is protected is information related to individuals in the program but not how the program operates and if it is sustained by the licensing fees is the goal.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jo Arlow, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Rowland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers.