
Public Safety Committee

HB 1875

Brief Description: Concerning state park rangers from the state parks and recreation commission.

Sponsors: Representatives Moscoso, Hope and Ryu.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) as a general authority Washington law enforcement agency.
- Exempts park rangers of the Commission from membership in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System.
- Requires the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) to provide programs and training standards for state park rangers and to also give them equal priority for enrollment in the CJTC's Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) as any other general authority law enforcement officer.
- Prohibits the CJTC from denying a state park ranger admission into the BLEA for any more than one quarter.
- Allows the admission of park rangers into the Washington State Patrol's academy.

Hearing Date: 2/19/13

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) is classified by statute as a "limited authority Washington law enforcement agency. The Washington State park system includes more than 100 developed parks, recreation programs, trails, boating safety and winter recreation. The Commission is charged, in part, with enforcing the state laws on public recreational lands.

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.

Park rangers go through a training course developed by the Commission and are vested with police powers to enforce Washington laws. Absent a special Commission, the statute does not expressly grant park rangers permission to enforce the laws of Washington outside the territory of state recreational lands.

The Commission may adopt policies and enforce rules pertaining to the use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways.

Limited Authority Agency. Limited authority Washington law enforcement agencies and officers have, as one of its functions, the apprehension or detection of persons committing infractions or violating traffic or specific criminal laws relating to limited subject areas. Agencies so designated include, but are not limited to: the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Gambling Commission, the Department of Corrections, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, and the State Liquor Control Board.

General Authority Agency. General authority Washington law enforcement agencies and officers, have as their primary function the detection and apprehension of persons committing infractions or violating the traffic or criminal laws in general of the state throughout the territorial boundaries of the state, as distinguished from a limited authority Washington law enforcement agency. It also includes any other unit of government expressly designated by statute as such an agency. The Washington State Patrol (WSP) and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) are general authority law enforcement agencies.

Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighter's Retirement System. The Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF) provides retirement benefits to full-time general authority law enforcement officers and firefighters throughout Washington. The LEOFF Plan 2 permits early retirement beginning at age 50 for members with 20 years of service with a 3 percent per year reduction to their retirement allowance up until the age of 53.

Criminal Justice Training Commission's Basic Law Enforcement Academy.

The Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) provides basic law enforcement training, and educational programs for law enforcement, corrections, and other public safety professionals in Washington.

Basic law enforcement officer training is generally required of all law enforcement officers, with the exception of volunteers, and reserve officers employed in Washington. The training consists of a 720-hour program covering a wide variety of subjects including: criminal law and procedures, traffic enforcement, cultural awareness, communication and writing skills, emergency vehicle operations, firearms, crisis intervention, patrol procedures, and criminal investigation and defensive tactics. All law enforcement personnel hired, transferred, or promoted, are required to complete the core training requirements within six months, unless the employee receives a waiver from the CJTC.

Washington State Patrol's Academy.

The WSP has a separate academy for state trooper cadets. The WSP's academy consists of a 26-week basic training course and eight weeks of practical instruction with experienced training officers throughout the state.

As a condition of continuing employment as a peace officer, all Washington peace officers (including the WSP's officers) must timely obtain and retain certification as peace officers. The CJTC has the authority to issue or revoke all peace officer certifications.

Summary of Bill:

The Commission is designated as a general authority Washington law enforcement agency, with enforcement authority equal to that of the WSP and the DFW. The Commission has the authority to enforce the traffic and criminal laws of the state throughout the territorial bounds of the state. Park rangers vested with police powers must enforce the rules of the Commission and must have and exercise, throughout the state, police powers and duties as are vested in sheriffs and peace officers.

The act does not provide park rangers of the Commission with membership in the LEOFF retirement system.

The CJTC must provide programs and training standards for the training of state park rangers. The CJTC must give the general authority peace officers of the Commission equal priority for enrollment in the CJTC's Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) training as any other general authority law enforcement officer. The CJTC is prohibited from denying a state park ranger admission into the BLEA for any more than one quarter.

The WSP academy is also open to any state patrol cadet, state patrol officer, and all park rangers of the Commission.

As a condition to continued employment (similar to the requirement for all other peace officers), state park rangers must obtain and retain basic certification as peace officers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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