

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6331

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Labor, February 7, 2014

Title: An act relating to self-service storage facilities.

Brief Description: Concerning self-service storage facilities.

Sponsors: Senators Hobbs, Benton and Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/07/14 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6331 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Holmquist Newbry, Chair; Braun, Vice Chair; Conway, Ranking Member; Hewitt, King and Kohl-Welles.

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: Owners of self-service storage facilities have certain statutory rights when an occupant fails to pay any part of the rent or other charges due. If the occupant is six days late, the owner may deny access to the storage space. If the occupant is 14 days late, the owner may terminate the occupant's right to use the storage space and place a lien on all personal property in the space by sending a preliminary lien notice by postage prepaid first class mail to the occupant's last known address and to the alternative address as listed in the rental agreement. The lien can be enforced to cover rent, labor, late fees, costs of the sale incurred pursuant to the rental agreement, and expenses necessary for the preservation, sale, or disposition of personal property.

A lien will attach if the preliminary lien notice has been sent and the termination date as set forth in the preliminary lien notice has passed without payment of amounts owed. Following attachment of the lien, the owner must serve the occupant, by personal service or by certified mail, a notice of final lien sale or disposition. The owner may sell the occupant's personal property if payment of amounts owed is not made within 14 days of the date the notice of final lien was mailed.

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.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The owner may send the preliminary lien notice to an occupant by email.

An owner may send notice of final lien sale or disposition by verified mail or by email. If the owner does not receive an email reply or receipt of delivery, the owner must send a second notice to the occupant's last known postal address by verified mail. The notice of final lien sale or disposition must include a statement that any stored motor vehicles or boats may be towed or removed from the facility in lieu of sale.

Notice may be emailed only under the following conditions:

- the occupant expressly agrees to email notice;
- the rental agreement specifies in bold type that notices are given by email;
- the owner provides an email address from which notices are sent and directs the occupant to modify their email settings to allow email from that particular address; and
- the owner notifies the occupant of any change in the email address prior to the email address change.

If the property stored by an occupant is a motor vehicle or boat and the occupant is in default for 60 or more days, the owner may have the vehicle or boat towed or removed from the facility in lieu of a sale. The owner must provide advance notice to the occupant of the towing company's contact information. The owner is not liable for any damage to the towed property once in possession of a third party.

If a rental agreement specifies a limit on the value of personal property that may be stored in an occupant's space, the limit is deemed to be the maximum value of the stored personal property in the occupant's space.

Verified mail is any method of mailing that is offered by the United States Postal Service that provides evidence of mailing.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill addresses requests by consumers to receive email notifications. If no reply or receipt is received via email, then the default is regular mail notifications. There are safeguards in the bill if email addresses are changed. Seventeen other states allow what is in this bill. Many users are transient in their lives, but forget to notify facilities when they move. However, people do tend to keep the same email address.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Patrick Reilly, Terry Kohl, Don Arsenault, WA Self-Storage Assn.