

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1741

As Reported by House Committee On:
Environment

Title: An act relating to allowing disabled persons to access public recreational sites or lands without a discover pass, vehicle access pass, or day-use permit.

Brief Description: Allowing disabled persons to access public recreational sites or lands without a discover pass, vehicle access pass, or day-use permit.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Blake and Condotta.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Environment: 2/10/15, 2/12/15, 2/17/15 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Exempts persons that display a disability pass, card, decal, or license plate from requirements to display a Discover Pass or day-use permit when operating or parking a motor vehicle on Department of Natural Resources and Department of Fish and Wildlife lands.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Chair; Peterson, Vice Chair; Shea, Ranking Minority Member; Short, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Farrell, Fey, Goodman, Harris, McBride, Pike and Taylor.

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

A Discover Pass or day-use permit must be displayed when operating or parking a motor vehicle in recreation areas on state lands managed by the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). A Discover Pass costs \$30 per year, while a day-use permit costs \$10 per

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day. Monetary penalties may be assessed for failure to comply with the Discover Pass and day-use permit requirements. Certain DFW lands may be accessed with a vehicle access pass that is issued in conjunction with certain hunting and recreational fishing licenses.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues disabled vehicle access passes to persons who meet any one of several criteria, either permanently or temporarily, including a limited ability to walk or see. A person's disability must be determined by a licensed physician or other health care professional and must be included as part of an application to the DOL. The DOL issues several types of disabled vehicle access passes, including placards and special license plates.

State law entitles disabled Washington residents to free admission to state parks, as well as a 50 percent reduction in state park campsite rental fees. In order to be eligible for free admission and reduced camping fees, the person must demonstrate, in an application for a State Parks Disability Pass, that the person receives Social Security or other government benefits for that disability, is legally blind or deaf, or possesses a DOL-issued permanent disability card, decal, or special license plate. A DOL-issued placard may be used in place of the State Parks Disability Pass for purposes of receiving free state parks admission and reduced camping fees.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Persons who display a disability pass issued by the State Parks and Recreation Commission or the DOL are exempt from the requirements to display a Discover Pass or day-use pass while operating or parking a motor vehicle on DNR and DFW lands, so long as the disability pass-holder is a driver or passenger in the vehicle accessing the recreation site.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies that a permanent disability pass issued by the State Parks and Recreation Commission is required in order for a vehicle to be exempted from Discover Pass or day-use permit requirements. The substitute bill also requires the person to whom the DOL or State Parks Disability Pass was issued to be present in the vehicle as a driver or passenger at the time of access to a recreation site.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will make it easier for disabled people to access state lands and is a good chance to give a break to the most vulnerable in our society.

(With concerns) The Legislature can make a policy choice to provide free access to recreation sites for disabled people, but it will need to find a way to make up for the lost revenue. Disabled populations are deserving of social policy, but the financial implications need to be considered. The Discover Pass generates an impressive amount of revenue and state agencies are hoping to keep making improvements to make it more successful.

(Opposed) Nobody likes the Discover Pass, but if it is in place it should be applied fairly across the board. Every year there are efforts to chip away at the revenue generated by the Discover Pass, which the State Parks and Recreation Commission can't afford.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Kretz, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Katie Manning and Daniel Farber, State Parks and Recreation Commission; Alia Griffing, Washington Federation of State Employees; and Melinda Posner, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

(Opposed) Stet Palmer.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Jim King