

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1021

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Law & Justice, March 31, 2015

Title: An act relating to creating a silver alert system.

Brief Description: Creating a silver alert system.

Sponsors: House Committee on Public Safety (originally sponsored by Representatives Appleton, Orwall, Robinson, Bergquist, Cody, Hudgins, Senn, Santos and Fey).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/15, 95-3.

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 3/24/15, 3/31/15 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; O'Ban, Vice Chair; Pedersen, Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Kohl-Welles, Pearson and Roach.

Staff: Melissa Burke-Cain (786-7755)

Background: A growing number of persons live with Alzheimer's disease or other age-related dementia. Patients with Alzheimer's disease or dementia may wander and become lost at any stage of the disease. These persons need to be found without delay because they face increased risk of injury or death due to weather exposure or because they go without medicine, food, or water.

The Washington State Patrol operates a missing children and endangered persons' advisory program. When a child or at-risk adult goes missing, an advisory is sent out through the voluntary cooperation of broadcasters, cable systems, law enforcement, state agencies, and others to increase the chances that the missing person can be quickly found.

Some, but not all, of the AMBER Alert notification resources can be used when WSP issues a missing children and endangered persons' advisory. Current law does not expressly authorize these advisory alerts when persons with Alzheimer's disease or dementia are reported missing.

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: For purposes of the missing children or endangered persons' advisory program, persons with Alzheimer's disease or other age-related dementia are "missing endangered persons." A "silver alert" is issued for missing endangered persons age 60 or older through the missing children or endangered persons' advisory program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: Approximately 60 percent of persons who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other forms of age-related dementia are likely to wander and may quickly become lost. If their families, friends, and caregivers had a way to report them missing, as other states do, the community could be alerted to watch for them. A number of stakeholders have worked with the sponsors of the bill and believe its present form is workable and should be moved forward. The current missing children or endangered persons' advisory program is working and if it identifies persons with dementia through a silver alert, the public will understand that the lost elder is also cognitively impaired. The silver alert may require some changes to the current Washington State Patrol plan, but it is feasible. There is no national silver alert system, but states such as Florida who have a statewide silver alert system have found that the silver alerts save lives because lost patients have a better chance of being found before they come to harm. The silver alert approach is an opportunity to to engage the public and act rapidly. Currently, Washington State does not have a coordinated approach to finding lost elders and there is confusion about who should act and what they should do. The silver alert will reduce confusion.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Appleton, prime sponsor; Mark Allen, WA Assn. of Broadcasters; Rob Huss, WA State Patrol; James McMahan, WA Assn. of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Jerry Reilly, Eldercare Alliance; Diana Stedden, ARC of WA; Patrick O'Neill, Nancy O'Neill, citizens.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: No one.