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SENATE BILL 6056

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State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Senators Hunt and Kuderer

Prefiled 12/26/17. Read first time 01/08/18. Referred to Committee on State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections.

1 AN ACT Relating to access of broadcasters to a geographic area  
2 subject to the declaration of a national, state, or local emergency;  
3 and adding a new section to chapter 38.52 RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 38.52  
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 (1) As used in this section:

8 (a) "Broadcaster" means a person or entity that holds a license  
9 issued by the federal communications commission under 47 C.F.R. Part  
10 73, 74, 76, or 78.

11 (b) "Emergency" means the declaration of a state or local  
12 emergency or disaster as provided under Washington state or federal  
13 law.

14 (c) "First informer broadcaster" means an individual who:

15 (i) Has been certified as a first informer broadcaster under this  
16 section and who is employed by, or acting pursuant to a contract  
17 under the direction of, a broadcaster; and

18 (ii)(A) Maintains, including repairing or resupplying,  
19 transmitters, generators, or other essential equipment at a broadcast  
20 station or facility; or

1 (B) Provides technical support services to a broadcaster or to  
2 another first informer broadcaster.

3 (2) To the extent practicable, consistent with public safety and  
4 recovery efforts, unless prohibited by state or federal law, and in  
5 the discretion of the incident commander, a state or local  
6 governmental agency shall allow a first informer broadcaster who is  
7 certified pursuant to this section access to an area affected by an  
8 emergency for the purposes of restoring, repairing, resupplying, or  
9 maintaining any facility or equipment necessary to acquire, produce,  
10 and transmit to the public essential emergency information, related  
11 alerts, and programming including, but not limited to, transporting  
12 fuel to alternative emergency power generators; travel on public  
13 roads within an area subject to a declaration of emergency; or access  
14 to the distribution of fuel, food, water, supplies, equipment, and  
15 any other materials necessary for producing a broadcast or a  
16 broadcasting signal.

17 (3) An emergency service agency may not seize a vehicle, fuel,  
18 food, water, or other essential materials in the possession of a  
19 first informer broadcaster.

20 (4) The state division of emergency management shall authorize a  
21 private entity organized under the laws of this state that represents  
22 a majority of the broadcasters in this state to establish a program  
23 for the issuance of credentials for first informer broadcasters  
24 pursuant to a plan developed by the private entity. The plan to  
25 provide credentials to first informer broadcasters must provide for  
26 training first informer broadcasters regarding:

27 (a) Risks associated with entering a geographic area subject to a  
28 declaration of an emergency;

29 (b) Best practices for working safely in a geographic area  
30 subject to a declaration of an emergency; and

31 (c) Best practices for working in a geographic area subject to a  
32 declaration of an emergency without hindering or interfering with the  
33 conduct of emergency services by an emergency service agency.

34 (5) The private entity selected by the division of emergency  
35 management to develop a plan for and issue credentials to first  
36 informer broadcasters shall annually submit to the division of  
37 emergency management a report regarding the operation of the program  
38 to issue credentials, including any changes to the plan or program.

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