

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1012

As Reported by House Committee On:
Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to responding to extreme weather events.

Brief Description: Addressing the response to extreme weather events.

Sponsors: Representatives Leavitt, Robertson, Ryu, Simmons, Reed, Ramel, Lekanoff, Pollet, Callan, Doglio, Orwall, Macri, Timmons, Donaghy, Reeves, Wylie, Bronoske, Paul, Springer and Thai.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans: 1/10/23, 1/13/23 [DP];
Appropriations: 1/30/23, 2/16/23 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Military Department to develop and implement an Extreme Weather Response Grant Program for the purpose of assisting with the costs of responding to community needs during periods of extremely hot or cold weather or severe poor air quality due to wildfire smoke.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INNOVATION, COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & VETERANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Cortes, Paul, Senn, Shavers and Street.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Volz, Ranking Minority Member; Barnard, Assistant Ranking Minority Member;

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Chambers, Christian, Corry, Waters and Ybarra.

Staff: Emily Poole (786-7106).

Background:

The Emergency Management Act establishes a comprehensive program of emergency management in the state, which is administered by the Military Department (Department) under the direction of the state's Adjutant General. The Adjutant General is responsible for developing a comprehensive emergency plan for the state. Each political subdivision—county, city, or town—of the state must establish or jointly create a local organization for carrying out emergency management functions in accordance with the state comprehensive emergency management plan. In the event of a disaster beyond local control, the Governor, through the Adjutant General, may assume operational control over all or any part of emergency management functions in the state.

The Adjutant General is required to administer a state program for emergency assistance to individuals who are victims of a natural disaster. Natural disasters include events that demand immediate action to protect public health or to provide relief to affected communities, as well as events that reach such a degree of destructiveness as to warrant the governor proclaiming a state of emergency. The emergency assistance program may include grants, loans, gifts of services, equipment, supplies, or funds to individuals who need assistance and who meet certain eligibility standards. Funds from the Disaster Response Account in the state treasury may be used for support of state agency and local government disaster response and recovery efforts.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to appropriations, the Military Department (Department) is required to develop and implement an Extreme Weather Response Grant Program for the purpose of assisting political subdivisions and federally recognized tribes with the costs of responding to community needs during periods of extremely hot or cold weather, or in situations of severe poor air quality from wildfire smoke. The Department may adopt rules to administer the program. The Department may award grants to political subdivisions and federally recognized tribes for reimbursement of costs if the costs are incurred:

1. by communities that have demonstrated a lack of local resources to address community needs; and
2. for the benefit of socially vulnerable populations.

Costs associated with the following activities are eligible for reimbursement:

- establishing and operating warming and cooling centers;
- transporting individuals and their pets to warming and cooling centers;
- purchasing supplies needed for cooling of congregate living settings;

- providing emergency temporary housing;
- retrofitting or establishing facilities within warming and cooling centers that are pet friendly in order to permit individuals to evacuate with their pets; and
- other related activities necessary for life safety during a period of extremely hot or cold weather, or in situations of severe poor air quality from wildfire smoke.

Funds from the Disaster Response Account may be used to award grants as part of the extreme weather response grant program.

For purposes of these requirements, "political subdivision" means any county, city, or town that has established a local organization for emergency management or any joint local organization for emergency management.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 4, 2023.

Effective Date: 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 is important for communities across the state as extreme weather events continue to occur. It is important to be able to provide adequate services for the most vulnerable populations. Taking care of residents during periods of extreme weather is a public safety issue. The number of declared disasters has been increasing, and this puts a strain on local resources. Cities struggle with decisions regarding when and where to open warming and cooling centers and how to staff them. Cities, towns, and tribes often do not have adequate resources to respond to extreme weather when it occurs. If cities are required to use funds to respond to emergency weather, those funds cannot be used for other services. This bill would help cities set up necessary partnerships. It is a challenge for cities to proactively set aside funds to be used for the activities covered by the program, and there should be changes to the eligibility criteria for the program.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mari Leavitt, prime sponsor; Kristina Walker, Tacoma City Council; Candice Bock, Association of Washington Cities; and James Baumgart, Washington Military Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Berg, Chopp, Davis, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Ryu, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stonier and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Dye, Rude, Schmick and Steele.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Corry, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Connors, Harris and Sandlin.

Staff: Jessica Van Horne (786-7288).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans:

Eligibility for the Extreme Weather Response Grant Program is limited to political subdivisions and federally recognized tribes in geographic areas where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts as determined by the Military Department. References to "socially vulnerable populations" are changed to "vulnerable populations."

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) Extreme weather events are unpredictable, dangerous, and expensive. Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency due to climate change, are difficult to forecast, and can last for protracted periods of time. The increase in the frequency and duration of extreme weather events has led to increased demands on local government budgets and staff resources, especially demands for shelters. Many communities lack the resources to provide shelters. Other local governments are making challenging decisions to budget in preparation for extreme weather events, to the detriment of other public services. The proposed grant program will assist local governments in setting up and maintaining these resources and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable members of their communities.

The fiscal note is based on costs reported by local governments. Local governments who proactively choose to budget funds for shelter request an amendment to apply for a grant if they demonstrate substantive contributions for emergency shelters.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Candice Bock, Association of Washington Cities; Alexandra Mather, Pierce Transit; and Jim Baumgart, Washington Military Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.