

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2020

As Reported by House Committee On:

Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to creating a state administered public infrastructure assistance program within the emergency management division.

Brief Description: Creating a state administered public infrastructure assistance program within the emergency management division.

Sponsors: Representatives Timmons, Abbarno, Leavitt, Ryu, Ramel, Reed, Ormsby, Rule, Donaghy, Doglio, Cheney, Reeves, Wylie, Paul and Shavers; by request of Military Department.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans: 1/10/24, 1/16/24 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/1/24, 2/3/24 [DPS(ICEV)].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the Military Department to administer a program for emergency assistance to county governments and federally recognized tribes that experience public infrastructure damage due to a natural, technological, or human-caused disaster.

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

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Volz, Ranking Minority Member; Barnard, Assistant Ranking Minority Member;

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Caldier, Chambers, Christian, Cortes, Paul, Senn, Shavers, Street, Waters and Wilcox.

Staff: Emily Poole (786-7106).

Background:

The Military Department (Department), under the direction of the state's Adjutant General, is responsible for administering a comprehensive emergency management program for the state. Each political subdivision of the state must establish or jointly create a local organization for carrying out emergency management functions in accordance with the Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

The Adjutant General is required to administer a state program for emergency assistance to individuals who are victims of a natural, technological, or human-caused disaster. 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.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Adjutant General is authorized to administer a program for emergency assistance to county governments and federally recognized tribal governments that experience or respond to public infrastructure damage due to a natural, technological, or human-caused disaster.

The Department may initiate rule making to address the distribution of funds from county governments to recipients within the county.

"Public infrastructure assistance" is generally defined to mean supplementary state assistance provided to county governments and federally recognized tribal governments when authorized under an emergency proclamation of the Governor for the cost of disaster-related public property debris removal, emergency protective measures to protect life and property, and permanent repair work to damaged or destroyed public infrastructure.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill allows the Department to initiate rule making to implement the public infrastructure assistance program's distribution of funds from county governments to recipients within the county, including political subdivisions, special purpose districts, and nonprofit organizations.

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) The state is experiencing an increasing number of disasters, including floods and wildfires, and most disasters do not rise to the level of a federal public assistance disaster declaration. Flooding, wildfires, and other disasters can cause significant damage to public infrastructure in affected communities. The state's ability to assist with repairs of public infrastructure at the local level is currently very limited. This bill will help communities rebuild after a disaster, especially if they do not qualify for federal assistance. The proposed program will only apply when there is a state-declared emergency, and the program will follow the same process as federal programs to avoid duplication of benefits. This bill will provide an avenue for the Department to establish a model program. The bill should allow cities to directly benefit from public infrastructure assistance.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Port districts operate essential public facilities and should be included in the proposed program.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Joe Timmons, prime sponsor; Brandy DeLange, Association of Washington Cities; Sharon Wallace, Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division; and Greg Hansen, City of Ferndale.

(Other) Chris Herman, Washington Public Ports Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Corry, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Connors, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Callan, Chopp, Davis, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Harris, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stonier, Tharinger and Wilcox.

Staff: Jessica Van Horne (786-7288).

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

No new changes were recommended.

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 would give the Military Department the authority to provide public assistance to local governments and tribes for disasters that do not qualify for federal assistance. Washington experiences numerous disasters that do not rise to the level of receiving a federal public disaster declaration. For every disaster that does qualify for federal assistance, many others do not, leaving communities with no way of meeting their needs after disasters like severe flooding or wildfires. The bill would be limited to only when the Governor issues a disaster declaration and would only provide certain kinds of assistance for activities like public infrastructure repairs and debris removal, and is designed to be supplementary and cover the gap between what local governments can afford and the threshold for receiving federal funds.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Robert Ezelle, Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.