

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SSB 5766

C 133 L 99

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Modifying the duties of a long-term care ombudsman.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wojahn, Long, Franklin, Winsley, Rasmussen and Costa).

Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Health Care

Background: The long-term care ombudsman program advocates for and resolves complaints on behalf of residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. The Department of Social and Health Services administers the program and oversees the state ombudsman, who is an employee of a private nonprofit agency selected by a competitive bidding process. The services are delivered by a network of regional ombudsmen who supervise activities of volunteers.

The ombudsman program currently has 350 volunteers. With its current staffing, the program is only able to have direct contact with 37 percent of the 61,000 residents in long-term care facilities in the state.

Current state statute does not reflect the same duties and responsibilities as are provided for in the federal law which authorizes the ombudsman program. State law does not address the full range of volunteer activities directed under federal law.

Summary: Long-term care ombudsmen are given explicit authority to inform residents, their representatives and others about their rights as clients of long-term care facilities under state law. They are also authorized to investigate and resolve complaints made by or on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities.

Further language brings all duties and authority authorized under the federal Older Americans Act into state law.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate 46 0

House 95 0

Effective: April 28, 1999