

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1041

As Reported by House Committee On: Judiciary

Title: An act relating to including correctional employees who have completed government-sponsored law enforcement firearms training to the lists of law enforcement personnel that are exempt from certain firearm restrictions.

Brief Description: Including correctional employees who have completed government-sponsored law enforcement firearms training to the lists of law enforcement personnel that are exempt from certain firearm restrictions.

Sponsors: Representatives Green, Angel, Goodman, McCune, Kelley, Hope, Dammeier, Warnick, Blake, Hurst, Moeller and Upthegrove.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 1/12/11, 1/27/11 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides an exemption from some firearms restrictions for correctional personnel who have completed government-sponsored law enforcement firearms training.
- Provides that governmental entities, and their officers, employees, and agents, are not liable for damages caused by the use or misuse of a firearm by off-duty correctional personnel based on a claim of negligence in the provision of firearms training.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Pedersen, Chair; Goodman, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Shea, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Eddy, Frockt, Kirby, Klippert and Nealey.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Orwall, Rivers and Roberts.

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.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background:

State law regulates the possession, use, and transfer of firearms and other weapons under the Firearms and Dangerous Weapons law. Among other things, this chapter imposes restrictions on the carrying of certain firearms and prohibits possession of weapons in certain places.

A person is prohibited from carrying a concealed pistol in Washington unless the person has a valid concealed pistol license. In addition, there are restrictions on the carrying of pistols in vehicles. A person may not carry a loaded pistol in a vehicle unless the person has a concealed pistol license and either the pistol is on the person, the person is within the vehicle at all times the pistol is present, or the pistol is locked within the vehicle and concealed from view. An unloaded pistol kept in a vehicle must be locked within the vehicle and concealed from view.

A number of exemptions are provided from the requirements relating to carrying concealed pistols and carrying pistols in a vehicle. Marshals, sheriffs, prison or jail wardens or their deputies, or other law enforcement officers of this state or another state are exempted, as are retired Washington law enforcement officers. Also exempted are federal officers and military members, persons engaged in various firearms manufacturing or dealing jobs, and persons engaged in various activities such as sport shooting, gun collecting, or outdoor recreation.

The Firearms and Dangerous Weapons law also prohibits possession of weapons in certain places. Weapons are prohibited in court facilities, taverns and bars, and restricted areas of jails and law enforcement facilities, public mental health facilities, and commercial airports. "Weapons" include firearms, explosives, spring-blade knives, daggers, dirks, sling shots, sand clubs, and metal knuckles. There is an exemption from these restrictions for law enforcement personnel and military and security personnel while engaged in official business.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Correctional personnel who have completed government-sponsored law enforcement firearms training are exempt from restrictions on: carrying a concealed pistol; carrying a pistol in a vehicle; and possession of weapons in court facilities, taverns and bars, and restricted areas of jails and law enforcement facilities, public mental health facilities, and commercial airports.

Retired correctional personnel who have completed government-sponsored law enforcement firearms training are exempt from restrictions on the carrying of a concealed pistol on the person or in a vehicle. The exemption applies only if the person has: obtained documentation from the agency in the state from which the person retired stating that the person retired for service or physical disability; and not been convicted or found not guilty by reason of insanity of a crime making the person ineligible for a concealed pistol license.

The exemptions created by the act do not create a duty on the part of the state or a local government with respect to the off-duty use or misuse of a firearm by correctional personnel. The state, local governments, and their officers, employees and agents, are not liable for damages caused by the use or misuse of a firearm by off-duty correctional personnel based on a claim of negligence in the provision of government-sponsored firearms training.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill did not include the provision stating that governmental entities are not liable for the off-duty use or misuse of a firearm by correctional personnel based on claims of negligence in providing firearms training.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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 will help protect our corrections officers when they are off-duty. Corrections officers are in close contact with prisoners on a daily basis and over a long period of time. In recent years the level of violence in correctional facilities has increased dramatically and there are a growing number of gang members in the community. Inadequate protections in the public disclosure law allows offenders to obtain personal information about officers from public records requests. The officers receive many threats and have a high risk of retaliation from former inmates when off-duty. Corrections officers are trained professionals and they should have the same rights as law enforcement officers to carry firearms to protect themselves outside the prison gates.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Green, prime sponsor; Mark Gjurasic, King County Corrections Guild; and Anna Jancewicz and Glenn Gaither, Teamsters Local 117.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.