

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1012

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government & Elections, March 24, 2023

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

Brief Description: Addressing the response to extreme weather events.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Leavitt, Robertson, Ryu, Simmons, Reed, Ramel, Lekanoff, Pollet, Callan, Doglio, Orwall, Macri, Timmons, Donaghy, Reeves, Wylie, Bronoske, Paul, Springer and Thai).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/28/23, 68-29.

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 3/14/23, 3/24/23 [DP-WM, DNP].

Brief Summary of 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.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.
Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Minority Report: Do not pass.
Signed by Senators Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier and Fortunato.

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: The Emergency Management Act establishes a comprehensive program of emergency management in the state, which is administered by the Military Department

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

(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 Department must 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 in geographic areas where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts as determined by the Department. Grants may be awarded for cost-reimbursement if the costs were incurred for the benefit of vulnerable populations by communities with a demonstrated lack of local resources to address community needs. Funds from the Disaster Response Account may be used to award grants as part of the extreme weather response grant program.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: In 2021, over 100 Washingtonians died in one week due to extreme heat. There were over 1000 lives lost that summer in the Pacific Northwest due to heat. Our children were kept inside for several days due to wildfire smoke, and we are often calling upon our Washington National Guard to assist with wildfires. These types of weather events are becoming more frequent and incumbent upon us to assist our small communities across the state to ensure they are able to help their most vulnerable citizens. Of our 281 cities, 57% are smaller than 5000 population. As we see an increase in extreme weather events, it puts more pressure on these small communities to respond. Whether it is extreme hot or cold, these communities do not have the necessary resources to respond. Small communities are relying on charity. This bill is a step in the right direction to helping alleviate the burden on communities. We are not immune to extreme heat in this state and ensuring that there are cooling and warming centers is critical to health and public safety. Local emergency managers have identified funding as a central barrier to providing the resources needed during extreme weather events. Currently, the county offers no funding for cold-weather shelters. This means they are staffed by volunteers who are not trained or prepared for emergencies and may not have consistent availability. There are no funds for blankets, food, and cots. The needs of the community seem to be growing and becoming more complex. We are relying on charity for a necessary service.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Mari Leavitt, Prime Sponsor; Candice Bock, Association of Washington Cities; Kimberly Hendrickson, City of Poulsbo; Sharon Wallace, Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.