

Committee Name:
Senate Committee –
Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy
(SC–JCP)

Appointments

03hr_SC–JCP_Appt_pt00

Committee Hearings

03hr_SC–JCP_CH_pt00

Committee Reports

03hr_SC–JCP_CR_pt00

Clearinghouse Rules

03hr_SC–JCP_CRule_03–

Executive Sessions

03hr_SC–JCP_ES_pt00

Hearing Records

03hr_ab0071

03hr_sb0000

Misc.

03hr_SC–JCP_Misc_pt00

Record of Committee Proceedings

03hr_SC–JCP_RCP_pt00

Vote Record

Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy

Date: 6-10
Moved by: Fitz
Seconded by: George
AB 71
SB
Clearinghouse Rule
AJR
SJR
Appointment
AR
SR
Other

A/S Amdt
A/S Amdt to A/S Amdt
A/S Sub Amdt
A/S Amdt to A/S Sub Amdt
A/S Amdt to A/S Amdt to A/S Sub Amdt

- Be recommended for:
Passage Adoption Confirmation Concurrence Indefinite Postponement
Introduction Rejection Tabling Nonconcurrency

Table with 5 columns: Committee Member, Aye, No, Absent, Not Voting. Rows include Senator David Zien, Senator Scott Fitzgerald, Senator Cathy Stepp, Senator Gary George, and Senator Tim Carpenter.

Totals: 5 0

Testimony of State Representative Steve Wieckert

Regarding

AB 71 – Bioterrorism Hoax Bill

Before the

Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy

June 10, 2003

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of AB 71.

This legislation is actually quite simple. It creates the same criminal penalty for hoaxes involving chemical, biological or radioactive substances as already exist for bomb threats.

Currently it is only a misdemeanor for someone to send an envelope through the mail containing talcum powder while deceiving the public into believing it is anthrax, for example.

This is serious in a number of ways. It strikes terror in the minds of all the innocent individuals who believe this is a deadly substance. Also, it uses finite resources of our fire, police and medical responders to respond to this hoax while they may be needed elsewhere. In addition, there can be many costs associated with this hoax, for example, the cost of emergency responders, lost time by employees evacuating buildings and other associated negative impacts such as people evacuating the building who may be hurt during the evacuation.

Wisconsin, since 911, has investigated over 700 cases of possible dangers involving these three types of harmful substances. While the number of these which were intentional hoaxes is difficult to determine, this legislation is important as it will tell potential pranksters that dealing with this type of hoax is not acceptable and is a felony instead of just a misdemeanor.

This legislation is endorsed by the Wisconsin Troopers Association and the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, which represents over 9,900 police professionals.

In closing, to show you the cost of what one small anthrax hoax can create, I would like to tell you about a situation that happened in Hartford, Connecticut.

An employee of the State Department of Environmental Protection for the State of Connecticut created a hoax by placing white powder on a paper towel on one of his coworkers' desks and labeled it anthrax. The building was evacuated and inspected for a two-day period. It cost the state \$1.5 million. In addition, decontamination efforts cost \$40,000 and the law enforcement costs to investigate this hoax had not been tabulated yet at the time of reporting. This is a tremendous cost and fear spread throughout the community for one single hoax. This is something that the bill is intended to stop.

In addition to the fines and potential prison time, this legislation also requires the person convicted to reimburse for all costs associated with and responding to this hoax.

Thank you for considering this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions.



ROBERT L. COWLES
Wisconsin State Senator - 2nd Senate District

MEMBER:
Environmental Resources Committee
Health, Utilities, Veterans and
Military Affairs Committee
Joint Committee for Review of
Administrative Rules

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
10:00
400 SOUTHEAST

Members of the Committee, thank you hearing this bill this morning.

Assembly bill 71 is strengthens the penalties against those who threaten to release a harmful substance by making this action a Class 1 Felony.

A threat of this kind is extremely serious and is treated as such. Depending on the situation, police, fire and HAZMAT teams are likely to be called, costing the state or local unit of government hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

This bill makes good sense. If someone makes a threat they know is false, they should face punishment and should be required to pay for the costs government incurs when reacting to the threat. The burden of payment should not be on the back of the taxpayer. The person or persons responsible for making the threat should be directly responsible for payment.

This bill will make people more accountable for their actions and hopefully serve as another deterrent to this type of behavior.

I hope you can support this bill today.

Thank you.