

SUBJECT: Judicial and law enforcement training regarding sex offender characteristics

COMMITTEE: Judicial Affairs — favorable, with amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Thompson, Alonzo, Duncan, Goodman, Solis, Willis, Zbranek

0 nays

2 absent — Hartnett, Nixon

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 20 — 31-0

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Judges and certain law enforcement personnel are required to undergo training regarding issues related to family violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and neglect.

DIGEST: SB 80, as amended, would add to the list of training issues, issues concerning sex offender characteristics. A peace officer employed by a state, county, special district or municipal agency would not have to undergo such training if the agency found it to be inconsistent with the officer's assigned duties.

The bill would take immediate effect if approved by two thirds of the membership of each house.

SUPPORTERS SAY: By training judges and law enforcement officers regarding characteristics of sex offenders, these officials would be better able to spot the warning signs of a pedophile or child molester and help prevent any further harm to children.

Sex offenses encompass many more crimes than simply sexual assault, including indecency with a child, child molestation, incest, sexual performance by a child, possession or promotion of child pornography, indecent exposure and aggravated kidnapping with the intent to sexually abuse. All of these crimes are felonies, punishable by five to 99 years in prison and up to a \$10,000 fine, with the exception of indecent exposure,

which is a Class B misdemeanor, maximum penalty of 180 days in jail and a \$2,000 fine.

SB 80 would not increase the total amount of training time for these officials, but would only include training on sex offenders with the already existing training about sexual abuse, child abuse and family violence.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee amendment would provide that a peace officer employed by a state, county, special district or municipal agency would not have to undergo such training if the agency found it to be inconsistent with the officer's assigned duties.

HB 1551 by Greenberg, which passed the House on April 21 and is pending in the Senate, would move the authority for criminal justice training programs in family violence from the Supreme Court to the Court of Criminal Appeals.