

Senate passes bill reforming community supervision

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Offenders who violate the terms of their community supervision will be dealt with swiftly and with tried and true methods under a bill passed today by the Washington State Senate on a 43-2 vote. "When an offender violates the term of his or her conditional release today, sometimes they go weeks without suffering the consequences for their actions," said [Sen. Jim Hargrove](#), D-Hoquiam, the bill's original sponsor. "This bill maintains community supervision and sets up swift and sure action by the Department of Corrections when the terms of that supervision are not met." Under [Senate Bill 6204](#), the Department of Corrections (DOC) will adopt rules creating a structured violation process that includes presumptive sanctions, takes into account aggravating and mitigating factors, and defines low-level violations, high-level violations and the resulting penalties.

Those penalties include: Low-level violation - DOC may sanction an offender to one or more non-confinement sanctions. Second and subsequent low level violations - DOC may sanction the offender to no more than three days in jail. High-level violations - DOC may sanction an offender to no more than 30 days in jail. An offender accused of committing a high-level violation would be entitled to a hearing. Hargrove says research has found that the threat of imprisonment or a severe penalty does little to provide a deterrent, but that increasing the certainty of being caught and punished did provide a significant deterrent. In addition, when combined with treatment geared to the specific risk and needs of the offender, the risk of reoffending fell by 16 percent. "These are evidence-based practices," said Hargrove. "Research shows that these methods will lower recidivism and save money by ensuring that treatment is part of our supervision and altering the behavior of our offenders as they are released." The bill will also establish stakeholder groups, communicate with law enforcement, and seek input from community custody officers for suggestions on improvement. The DOC will report back to the Legislature at the end of 2012 and 2013.