

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[Second Reprint]
ASSEMBLY, No. 1856

with Senate committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 12, 1997

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1856 (2R) with amendments.

Assembly Bill No. 1856 (2R), as amended, establishes a body vest replacement program for local law enforcement officers, officers and troopers of the State Police, and State corrections officers. The program will involve the awarding of grants to local law enforcement agencies, the Division of State Police and the Department of Corrections which will then purchase the vests for their officers and troopers. The distribution schedule for the program is to be designed to effectuate a five-year vest replacement cycle; according to the sponsor, the effective life span of a body vest is five to seven years.

The Attorney General will promulgate appropriate rules and regulations for grant application procedures for law enforcement agencies that wish to participate in the program, identifying criteria (such as crime rates and the age and condition of the vest currently used by the applicant agency's officers) to be used to prioritize grant requests. The Attorney General's guidelines also would identify the specific brands of vests that may be purchased with grant moneys.

The Attorney General, with the assistance of the Superintendent of State Police and the Commissioner of Corrections, is to establish a vest distribution schedule for the State Police and the Department of Corrections that will, to the greatest extent practicable, provide for a balance among the number of State Police officers receiving vests in each of the five years of the cycle. In the case of State corrections officers, the schedule is to give first priority to those officers assigned supervision and control responsibilities in the State's maximum security prisons. Second priority is to be given those officers assigned supervision and control duties in the State's medium security prisons.

Funding for the grants will be provided through the collection of an additional fee of \$1 added by the bill to all vehicle fines, penalties and forfeitures of bail relating to violations of the State's motor vehicle laws. The money will be deposited into a newly created "Body Armor Replacement Fund" from which the Attorney General will make the grants. Up to \$75,000 from the fund may be used annually by the Attorney General for administrative costs.

Finally, the bill provides that an amount not to exceed \$250,000 from this fund will be allocated annually for the operation of the "law Enforcement Officer Crisis Intervention Services" telephone hotline; this hotline would be established upon the enactment of Assembly Bill No. 806 (2R) (Farragher/Corodemus).

As amended and reported, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 1118 (1R) (Inverso/Cafiero) as amended and reported by this committee on June 12, 1997.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to correct the wording of subsection d. of section 2 to ensure that the amount of funds needed for the program are collected; to permit the Department of Law and Public Safety to use up to \$75,000 annually from the monies deposited into the fund for administrative costs; and to remove a provision requiring the Attorney General to consult with the Superintendent of State Police and the Commissioner of Corrections on the vest distribution.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) estimates that the surcharge will generate approximately \$2.66 million the first year following enactment, \$3.26 million in the second year and \$3.52 million in the third year.

The average cost for a vest is approximately \$528. On a five year cycle, 20 percent of the 25,000 local law enforcement officers would need 5,000 vests for an approximate annual cost of \$2.64 million for local law enforcement grants; twenty percent of the 2,590 State troopers would need 518 vests for an approximate annual cost of \$273,504; and twenty percent of the approximately 5,000 State corrections officers would need 1,000 vests for an approximate annual cost of \$528,000. The maximum total annual cost may be \$3.4 million.

The bill permits the Department of Law and Public Safety to use up to \$75,000 annually from the monies collected for administrative costs.