Washington State
House of Representatives
Office of Program Research

BILL ANALYSIS

Technology, Economic Development, & Veterans Committee

SB 6046

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington division of civil air patrol as part of the Washington military department.

Sponsors: Senators Wagoner, Lovick, Conway, Liias and Nobles; by request of Military Department.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a Civil Air Patrol Division (CAP) within the Washington Military Department to serve at the Governor's order.
- Allows the CAP to cooperate with state agencies, local governments, and tribes to provide training, communication, disaster relief, cyber security missions, or search and rescue.
- Specifies the Commanding Officer and participation in the CAP.

Hearing Date: 2/20/26

Staff: Martha Wehling (786-7067).

Background:

The Washington Military Department (MIL) is directed by the Adjutant General and safeguards Washington residents, property, and the environment by providing trained forces for emergency response, disaster preparedness and recovery, and alternative education for at-risk youth. The six operational divisions within the MIL use state and federal resources to provide defense and security for state and federal purposes. The Washington Air National Guard consists of two wings and the Western Air Defense Sector whose purpose is to refuel military jets, enhance

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cyber security, and provide assistance during state emergencies.

Within the MIL, "officers" are commissioned and warrant officers, and "enlisted persons" are members of the organized militia other than commissioned and warrant officers. The "organized militia" is the commissioned officers, warrant officers, enlisted persons, organizations, staffs, corps, and departments of the regularly commissioned, warranted, and enlisted militia of the state. A "cadet" is an individual attending the Washington State Patrol academy to become a commissioned trooper.

The Governor has the authority to prescribe the organized militia's numbers, composition, distribution, organization, arms, uniforms, equipment, training, and discipline, subject to federal and state law.

Some state agencies and local governments have aviation support units that assist the state in emergencies, such as firefighting and search and rescue. These include the Washington Air National Guard in Spokane, Camp Murray, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord; the Department of Natural Resources in Olympia, Yakima, and additional bases during fire season; the King County Sheriff's Office; and the Pierce County Air Unit. The Washington State Patrol has an Aviation Section which uses aircraft and equipment for enforcement, incident assessment, transportation, and surveillance. The Aviation Section is based in Olympia.

The federal Civil Air Patrol (federal CAP) supports the United States Air Force. The federal CAP provides emergency services, aerospace education, cadet programs, and support to Air Force personnel. The federal CAP consists of state-level "wings," and is a congressionally chartered, nonprofit, all-volunteer organization. The Washington wing of the federal CAP is based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Civil Air Patrol (state CAP) Division is established. A member of the Washington wing of the federally chartered Civil Air Patrol (federal CAP) may volunteer to be a member of the state CAP. Commissioned officers, warrant officers, enlisted persons, and cadets are required to be members of the state CAP.

The commanding officer of the federal CAP is required to be the head of the state CAP, except in the case of a vacancy. In that situation, the civil air patrol is required to designate another officer. The director of the state CAP may employ personnel.

The Governor may order the state CAP into active state service. The state CAP may cooperate with a state agency, county, city, town, or federally recognized tribe within the state by entering into an agreement to provide:

- cadet training;
- communications;
- cyber security missions;

- disaster relief;
- search and rescue missions or assistance; or
- other related functions within the same scope as the federal CAP.

The head of the state CAP may accept reimbursement for any expenses incurred by the state CAP for the performance of the duties identified above.

The operation of the federal CAP is not changed or affected by the creation of the state CAP. Cooperation with the United States government and its agencies and departments is not changed or affected by the creation of the state CAP.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.