

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5730

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 20, 2007

Title: An act relating to authorizing port districts to provide financial support to nonprofit organizations that serve commercial seafarers while in port.

Brief Description: Authorizing port districts to provide financial support to nonprofit organizations that serve commercial seafarers while in port.

Sponsors: Senators Fairley, Swecker and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/19/07, 2/20/07 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Kline and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton and Pridemore.

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: There are over 70 port districts in Washington. Port districts have powers to build, develop, operate and regulate harbor improvements, including transportation facilities for rail, motor vehicle, air and water transportation. Article VIII, Section 8 of the Washington Constitution expressly states that the use of public funds by port districts for industrial development or trade promotion is a public use for a public purpose.

In 1985 the Legislature deemed economic development programs to be a public purpose for port districts, and gave port districts the authority to contract with nonprofit corporations to further economic development in the districts.

Summary of Bill: Port districts are granted authority to provide financial support, including charitable contributions, to nonprofit organizations whose principal, if not exclusive, function is to provide support services to commercial seafarers while their ships are in port.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is narrowly drafted to address a specific problem. This bill is a response to a state audit, in which the auditor found that some of our contributions fell outside of our statutory authority. As a result we reduced the charitable contributions we gave to non-profit organizations that for many years have provided services to the crew of foreign flag vessels. Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Catholic charities work in concert to provide these services. They help foreign seafarers call home and send money home, and get around while they are in port. This is even more important since 9-11 because foreign crew members' mobility is more restricted now. The bill is very narrowly drafted and applies only to services provided to commercial seafarers while their ships are in port.

CON: I've spent five years trying to curb the excesses of senior staff who have a favorite non-profit organization. This bill just opens another Pandora's Box to allow port staff to abuse the system.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Terry Finn, Port of Seattle.

CON: Paul Telford, citizen.