

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6112

As Passed Senate, February 7, 1996

Title: An act relating to costs allowed for vocational rehabilitation benefits.

Brief Description: Increasing allowable costs for vocational rehabilitation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Trade (originally sponsored by Senator Wojahn).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Trade: 1/15/96, 1/24/96 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/7/96, 26-23.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & TRADE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6112 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Pelz, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Franklin, Fraser and Wojahn.

Staff: Jack Brummel (786-7428)

Background: Under the state workers compensation system, vocational rehabilitation expenditures may not exceed \$3,000 in any 52-week period. An additional 52-week period may be granted with the approval of the Director of the Department of Labor and Industries.

Summary of Bill: For claims filed after July 1, 1996, vocational rehabilitation benefits are increased to \$5,000 in any 52-week period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The state payment for vocational rehabilitation has not kept up with inflation. Time-loss expenses can be cut through use of vocational services.

Testimony Against: We should hold off on this until we get claims management under control.

Testified: PRO: Senator Wojahn, prime sponsor; Julie Grant, Grant Co.; Robby Stern, WA State Labor Council; CON: Clif Finch, AWB; Dave Ducharme, WA Self-Insurers Association.