

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 6420

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Allowing an application for initial determination to be in writing or in another form determined by the commissioner of the employment security department.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Senators Schow, Heavey and Winsley; by request of Employment Security Department).

**Senate Committee on Commerce & Labor**

**House Committee on Commerce & Labor**

**Background:** Under Washington's current unemployment insurance (UI) law, an individual is required to make his or her initial application for UI benefits in writing. In order for an application to be made over the telephone, the information must be taken over the telephone, mailed to the individual for signature, and returned to the Employment Security office before any eligibility decision or payment can be made.

The Employment Security Department is requesting the authority to allow alternative means for claims application in order to streamline the current system, reduce administrative costs and transition the UI application process into call centers, where the majority of claims will be handled via telephone or other electronic media.

**Summary:** The current state requirement mandating that initial applications for unemployment insurance benefits be made in writing is modified. In addition, individuals are permitted to use other media as determined appropriate by the Commissioner of Employment Security to make their initial unemployment claims.

The Legislature directs the Employment Security Department to ensure that unemployment insurance claimants remain actively involved in reemployment activities and that the call center approach to unemployment insurance claim processing be evaluated.

Beginning July 1, 1999, the Employment Security Department must implement a job search monitoring program. Claimants who have received five or more weeks of benefits must provide evidence of seeking work. This includes contacts with at least three employers per week, or job search activity at the local reemployment center. The department is directed to consult with the unemployment advisory committee in developing the program's work search requirements.

The department must ensure that all claimants register for job search on the electronic labor exchange that supports direct access for employers selecting job applicants. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee is directed to undertake a performance study of the call center process.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	47	0	
House	87	11	(House amended)
Senate	46	0	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** June 11, 1998