

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5502

As Passed House - Amended:

April 12, 1999

Title: An act relating to a salary survey report by the marine employees' commission.

Brief Description: Reporting the salary survey of ferry employees.

Sponsors: Senator Haugen; by request of Marine Employees' Commission.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/25/99, 4/5/99 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/12/99, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

(As Amended by House Committee)

- Exempts the Marine Employees Commission's salary survey from public disclosure laws and establishes the State Auditor's Office as the entity who is authorized to audit the survey's raw data.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; K. Schmidt, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic 1st Vice Chair; Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; Buck; G. Chandler; DeBolt; Fortunato; Haigh; Hatfield; Hurst; Lovick; McDonald; Mielke; Mitchell; Murray; Ogden; Pflug; Radcliff; Schindler; Schual-Berke; Skinner and Wood.

Staff: Reema Shawa (786-7301).

Background:

Under current law, the Marine Employees Commission (MEC) is required to conduct a biennial salary survey which collects wage and benefit information from both

private and public ferry systems and shipyards along the West Coast, Alaska, and British Columbia. Participation by private employers is purely voluntary, with some or all of the participants requesting that their responses be kept confidential.

The purpose of the salary survey is to compare Washington State Ferry System employee wages, hours, employee benefits, and conditions of employment with those of other comparable ferry systems. This survey allows the Washington State Ferry System and the 13 labor unions representing state ferry employees to obtain prevailing wage and benefit conditions prior to contract negotiations that take place every two years.

The results of the survey are published in a final report, which communicates the findings as a composite average of the data collected, as opposed to identifying the specific, raw data from each participant. This final report is made public, but the actual raw data from each employer is kept confidential. However, if anyone should request a copy of the raw data, the MEC must release the information, per current public disclosure laws. Because many of the private participants request confidentiality, this fact alone may cause them to stop participating in the survey. Should the private participants drop out, the survey would then only be a query of public-owned operations, and thus the value and validity of the results would be significantly decreased when being used as a comparative, bench-marking tool in contract negotiations.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Provisions are established which limit the MEC to publishing a report on the survey results only. The salary and benefit information collected from private employers that identifies a specific employer with the salary and employee benefit rates which that employer pays to its employees is not subject to public disclosure under Chapter 42.17 RCW.

The State Auditor's Office is established as the entity who will audit the survey's raw data when petitioned to do so.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Will help to maintain private participation.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Janis Lien, Marine Employees' Commission.