

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1774

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 18, 1999
Judiciary, April 1, 1999

Title: An act relating to occupational drivers' licenses.

Brief Description: Regulating occupational drivers' licenses.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Wolfe, Romero, Tokuda, Stensen, D. Schmidt, Ogden, Gombosky, Keiser, Dickerson and Santos).

Brief History: Passed House 3/11/99, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/18/99 [w/oRec-JUD].
Judiciary: 3/29/99, 4/1/99 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That it be referred to Committee on Judiciary without recommendation.
Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Goings, Vice Chair; Benton, Costa, Horn, Jacobsen, Johnson, Morton, Oke, Prentice, Sheahan, T. Sheldon and Shin.

Staff: Paul Neal (786-7315)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.
Signed by Senators Heavey, Chair; Kline, Vice Chair; Costa, Goings, Hargrove, Haugen, Johnson, Long and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Background: A person whose license has been mandatorily suspended or revoked due to a criminal conviction other than vehicular homicide or vehicular assault may obtain an occupational driver's license if the person can show, among other things, that he or she is engaged in an occupation or trade that requires operation of a motor vehicle. A person whose license has been administratively suspended may not obtain an occupational license. People who have had their drivers' licenses administratively suspended due to failure to pay a fine are often not able to pay the fine because of financial constraints. Proponents of the bill assert that enrollment in an apprenticeship program could give such a person the skills to obtain a job, pay the fine, and in some cases, get off of public assistance.

Summary of Amended Bill: A person whose driver's license has been administratively suspended for failure to pay a traffic ticket, violation of financial responsibility laws, or

multiple infractions within a specified period may apply for an occupational driver's license. In order to qualify, the applicant must show that he or she is in one of the following programs where a driver's license is required: (1) a member or an applicant for an apprenticeship program or on-the-job training program; (2) a program that assists persons who are enrolled in a WorkFirst program to become gainfully employed; or (3) undergoing substance abuse treatment or participating in a 12-step program such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

The occupational driver's license is valid for the period of the suspension but in no case for more than two years except that the occupational license for a person who has only applied to be in an apprenticeship program is in effect no longer than 14 days. The Department of Licensing is required to cancel the license if the person is no longer enrolled in a qualifying program. If the license is canceled, the driver may obtain a new license at no cost by submitting evidence of enrollment in another qualifying program. The Department of Licensing will specify on the occupational driver's license which days and hours and over what routes a person may drive who is undergoing substance abuse treatment or participating in meetings of a 12-step program.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The substitute bill did not include people undergoing substance abuse treatment or participating in meetings of a 12-step program such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The Department of Licensing in the substitute bill was not required to specify what hours, days, and routes a person is allowed to drive who has an occupational driver's license and is undergoing substance abuse treatment or participating in meetings of a 12-step program such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2000.

Testimony For: Apprenticeship programs require people to have a valid driver's license before they will accept them into the program. The people affected by this bill need to be able to drive back and forth to work in order to earn the money to pay the traffic ticket that led to their losing their licenses.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Rep. Cathy Wolfe; Bob Markholt, Seattle Vocational Institute; Bob Dilger, WA State Bldg. and Construction Trades Council; Peter Guzman, City of Tacoma LEAP Coordinator; Hayward Evans.