

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5136

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Labor & Workforce Development, January 29, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to a claimant's right to receive unemployment compensation when the claimant leaves work due to domestic violence.

**Brief Description:** Allowing a claimant to receive unemployment compensation when leaving work due to domestic violence.

**Sponsors:** Senators Fairley, Patterson, Kohl-Welles, Costa, Fraser, Wojahn, Thibaudeau, Kline and Prentice.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor & Workforce Development: 1/13/99, 1/29/99 [DPA, DNPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kline and Wojahn.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Hochstatter and Oke.

**Staff:** Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

**Background:** Unemployment insurance benefits are available to those who qualify. In order to qualify, a person must be able to work, available for work, and actively seeking work. Current law describes what it means to be actively seeking work.

In addition, a person is disqualified from benefits if he or she left work without "good cause," as defined. Seeking protection from domestic violence is not currently considered "good cause" for quitting employment.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** A person claiming unemployment insurance benefits, who is temporarily unable to search for work because of domestic violence or stalking, is deemed to qualify for up to 12 weeks of benefits while seeking safety, and is not required to actively seek work during that time.

The claimant can prove the existence of domestic violence by showing the need for medical treatment; hiding or relocating; pursuing legal remedies; or participating in various types of supportive counseling for victims of domestic violence.

Quitting work because of domestic violence or stalking is considered "good cause" and enables the victim to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits. "Domestic violence" and "stalking" are defined elsewhere in statute.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** Participation in a support group is removed as a qualifying factor, and a claimant is required to document qualifying factors for claim.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 13, 1999.

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

**Testimony For:** Obtaining unemployment benefits will help domestic violence victims reestablish themselves after personal dislocation.

**Testimony Against:** Helping domestic violence victims is a good idea; but the UI trust fund is not the appropriate funding mechanism. It would be better to use the crime victims fund.

**Testified:** PRO: Pam Crane, UI Law Project; Lisa Stone, NW Women's Law Center; Jeff Johnson, Labor Council; Louise Bruehl, WA Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs; Sharon Case, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence; CON: Gary Smith, Independent Business Assn.; Clif Finch, Assn. of WA Business.