

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJR 8203

As of February 10, 2011

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to allow for public official salary reductions.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer, Zarelli, Tom, Murray, Kastama, Keiser, Rockefeller, Regala, Conway, Hobbs, Shin, McAuliffe and Litzow.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/27/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Steve Jones (786-7440)

Background: Under the state Constitution, the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials prescribes the salary of state elected officials of the executive branch; members of the Legislature; and judges of the state Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Superior Courts, and District Courts. The salaries of county and municipal elective and appointive officials are prescribed by either the respective legislative authority or a local salary commission authorized by a local ordinance or resolution.

The state Constitution allows salary increases for these elected and appointed officials during their terms of office, but salary decreases during their terms of office are prohibited.

Summary of Bill: If the Legislature, as part of budget reduction legislation, reduces the compensation of state employees who do not hold elected or appointed positions, the compensation of all elected and appointed state officers, including judges and legislators, must be reduced in the same manner.

If the Legislature prohibits an increase in the compensation of state employees who do not hold elected or appointed positions, the prohibition applies to all elected and appointed state officers, including judges and legislators.

If a local government legislative authority, as part of a budget reduction measure, reduces the compensation of employees who do not hold elected or appointed positions, the legislative authority may reduce the compensation of all elected and appointed officers of that jurisdiction in the same manner.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

If a local government legislative authority prohibits an increase in the compensation of public employees who do not hold elected or appointed positions, the legislative authority may apply the prohibition to all elected and appointed officers of that jurisdiction in the same manner.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The resolution is subject to ratification by the voters at the next general election.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Elected officials should share the sacrifices that other public employees are experiencing during this period of economic hardship.

CON: This measure forces the members of the Legislature to make decisions that directly affect their own salaries. The salaries of elected officials should be kept out of the political arena; the decision should be left to the independent discretion of the State Salary Commission.

OTHER: Judges want to serve the people of the state in a fair and impartial manner, without undue pressure or threats of retribution. This proposal politicizes the salary-setting process. The courts have already experienced significant budget reductions while experiencing greatly increased caseloads.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor.

CON: Teri Wright, Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials.

OTHER: Judge Richard McDermott, Superior Court Judges Association.