

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6343

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Labor & Workplace Standards

**Title:** An act relating to establishing the healthy energy workers task force.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the healthy energy workers task force.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, Keiser, Hasegawa, Palumbo and Saldaña).

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Labor & Workplace Standards: 2/15/18, 2/22/18 [DP].

#### **Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Establishes a task force to review information from the presumption of occupational disease for Department of Energy Hanford site workers and to develop recommendations for diagnosing and treating diseases or other health problems of Hanford site workers.
- Requires the task force to meet twice a year and to submit annual reports to the Legislature.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Sells, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; McCabe, Ranking Minority Member; Pike, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doglio, Frame and Manweller.

**Staff:** Trudes Tango (786-7384).

#### **Background:**

Under the state's Industrial Insurance Act (Act), employers must be insured through the State Fund administered by the Department of Labor and Industries (Department) or may self-insure if qualified. Workers who, in the course of employment, are injured or disabled from an occupational disease are entitled to benefits. Depending on the disability, workers are

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entitled to medical, temporary time-loss, and vocational rehabilitation benefits, as well as benefits for permanent disabilities. To prove an occupational disease, the worker must show that the disease arose "naturally and proximately" out of employment. For certain firefighters, there is a prima facie presumption that the following medical conditions are occupational diseases: respiratory disease; certain heart problems; specified cancers; and infectious diseases.

Through a special agreement with the Department, the United States Department of Energy (DOE) operates as a self-insured employer for the purposes of providing coverage for workers of contractors at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. In addition, there are federal programs that provide compensation to certain DOE workers.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated, the Healthy Energy Workers Task Force (Task Force) is established to: (1) review information generated through the presumption of occupational disease for DOE Hanford site workers; and (2) develop recommendations for successfully diagnosing and treating diseases or other health problems experienced by workers who have performed work at the Hanford site.

The Governor must appoint the following members to the Task Force, subject to confirmation from the Senate:

- an individual representing the DOE Richland Operations Office;
- an individual representing plumbers and steamfitters Local Union 598;
- the director of the Department or a designee;
- the Secretary of the Department of Health or a designee;
- an individual representing an organization that contracts to perform work for the Hanford site;
- an individual representing a labor union in Washington, other than Local Union 598;
- and
- an individual representing Harborview Medical Center.

Appointments are for a term of four years and may be renewed. Medical professionals employed by the University of Washington (UW) or Harborview Medical Center may be invited to participate on the Task Force in an advisory capacity by the Director of the Department, in consultation with the UW or Harborview Medical Center.

The Task Force must focus on:

- an analysis of data regarding the participation and effectiveness of any presumption of occupational disease policy for DOE workers at the Hanford site;
- research and development of protocols for diagnosing diseases or other health problems that may be the result of exposure to hazardous substances or other dangerous conditions at the Hanford site;
- research and development of patient monitoring or surveillance strategies that will result in the collection of data on long-term outcomes for workers who have been

- treated for diseases or other health problems that may be linked to working at the Hanford site;
- surveying data and information from other states and countries that may help in developing strategies for diagnosing and treating diseases or other health problems that may be linked to working at the Hanford site; and
  - making recommendations on public health programs that may be developed at the state level to benefit workers who have worked, or are working, at the Hanford site.

The Task Force must hold its first meeting by October 1, 2018, and must meet at least two times per year. The UW and the Department must provide administrative support to the Task Force, including arranging for the inaugural meeting and subsequent meetings.

The Task Force must provide a report to the Legislature by December 1 of each year, beginning in 2019. The Department may provide staff support to the Task Force in writing the report. The report may contain a minority report.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Hanford workers are getting sick and there needs to be a better understanding of the connection between the illnesses and the exposures at Hanford. This bill is a result of stakeholders getting together and talking about how to address this issue. This bill will help find solutions on how to treat workers. The scope of the Task Force is significant and calls for participation from advisers from the Center of Excellence at Harborview for injured workers.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Brown, prime sponsor; and Ian Goodhew, University of Washington Medicine – Harborview Medical Center.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.