

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4020

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Concerning displaced timber workers.

Sponsor(s): Senators Owen, Snyder, Conner, McDonald, Johnson, Amondson, Sutherland, Madsen, Rasmussen, McCaslin, Anderson, Vognilid, L. Smith, Bailey, von Reichbauer and McMullen.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7117).

Background: The timber supply in Washington has declined over recent years, partly because of changes in management plans for the national forests and federal actions taken to conserve the forest habitat for endangered species. Studies of the impact of the timber supply decline on workers and communities in timber-dependent areas conclude that approximately 20,000 jobs in the state may be lost.

In the past, Congress has enacted legislation to assist displaced workers affected by federal policy changes, including federal trade policy and the Clean Air Act.

Summary of Bill: Congress is urged to enact the Timber Workers' Fairness Act to provide adequate benefits to timber workers impacted by federal decisions. Congress should provide benefits similar to those provided to workers impacted by federal trade policies under the Trade Adjustment Act, and federal environmental policies under the Clean Air Act.

The Timber Workers' Fairness Act should include the following provisions:

A training program of adequate duration to provide a transition to family wage jobs;

Training allowances to help families survive through the retraining program. The allowances should be available to self-employed individuals and people who have not worked enough hours to be eligible for unemployment. Families eligible for unemployment insurance should be eligible for an extension of up to 52 weeks if they are participating in training; and

Support services for child care needs, transportation, and emergency medical services.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Not applicable.

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: None.