

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2626

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, February 28, 2008

Title: An act relating to authorizing the governor to suspend the waiting week for individuals who are unemployed because of an emergency or disaster.

Brief Description: Studying options for suspending the waiting week for individuals who are unemployed because of an emergency or disaster.

Sponsors: House Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives VanDeWege, Kessler, Blake, Takko, DeBolt, Ormsby, Roberts, Kenney, Morrell, Simpson and Chase).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/18/08, 94-1.

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 2/28/08 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Franklin, King, Murray and Prentice.

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

Background: An individual is eligible to receive regular unemployment benefits if the individual: (1) worked at least 680 hours in his or her base year; (2) was separated from employment through no fault of his or her own or quit work for good cause; and (3) is able to work and is actively seeking employment. The individual also must have been unemployed for a waiting period of one week.

The one-week waiting period is required to receive federal reimbursement of one-half of benefits paid in the first week of extended unemployment benefits. The state "triggers on" to the extended benefits program during periods of high unemployment. The program begins the third week after a week for which there is an "on" indicator.

Summary of Bill: The Employment Security Department (ESD) is required to study options for suspending the waiting period requirement for individuals who are unemployed because of an emergency or disaster, and to examine ways to mitigate the impacts, if any, of these options on the unemployment compensation system. ESD is also required to forward information from the Military Department about other means of assisting individuals impacted by an emergency

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or disaster. A report from ESD to the appropriate legislative committees is due by December 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony Engrossed Substitute Bill: PRO: This bill sets up a structure for ESD to study the option available for suspending the waiting period for individuals to receive unemployment compensation. ESD is also required to forward information from the Military Department about other ways to assist people impacted by an emergency or disaster.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Repetitive Van De Wege, prime sponsor.