

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5193

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As of January 19, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to unemployment insurance claim adjudicators.

**Brief Description:** Concerning unemployment insurance claim adjudicators.

**Sponsors:** Senators Conway, Keiser, Hasegawa and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor, Commerce & Tribal Affairs: 1/20/21.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Employment Security Department (ESD) to create an annual training program to train qualified persons to perform as unemployment insurance claim adjudicators.
- Mandates the Office of Financial Management to collaborate with ESD to provide opportunities for certain state employees to participate in the annual trainings.
- Requires ESD to provide an annual report to the Legislature on the number of persons with current adjudicator certifications.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

**Staff:** Susan Jones (786-7404)

**Background:** An unemployed individual (claimant) is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits (UI benefits) if the individual: (1) worked at least 680 hours in the base year; (2) was separated from employment through no fault of the claimant's or quit work for good cause; and (3) is able to work, available to work, and is actively searching for suitable work. The Employment Security Department (ESD) administers Washington State's unemployment insurance program.

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

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The CARES Act provided many new and extended UI benefit programs, which ESD administers. One program was the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, providing UI benefits to self-employed individuals, workers with insufficient work history, and others who are not eligible for regular state UI benefits. Another program was the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, which provided an additional \$600 per week of benefits. The FPUC expired at the end of July 2020. The Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program was authorized through a presidential memorandum signed on August 8, 2020. The LWA program provided an additional \$300 per week of benefits for the weeks ending August 1st through 29th and September 5th. Many of the federal CARES Act programs continue through the Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act, which was signed into law on December 27, 2020, for weeks of unemployment after 2020 through March 14, 2021.

During the COVID pandemic, UI claims, including claims under the new federal programs, increased substantially. ESD hired and trained new staff to process claims, including members of the national guard.

**Summary of Bill:** The bill as referred to committee not considered.

**Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute):** ESD must create an annual training program to train qualified persons to perform as unemployment insurance claim adjudicators. The program must:

- be open to both state and other public employees and private citizens;
- be of sufficient quality that persons completing the training and any required continuing education would be ready to work as a UI claim adjudicator within one week of commencing employment with ESD; and
- provide a certification of completion to participants who complete the program.

The Office of Financial Management must collaborate with ESD to provide opportunities for state employees, who meet the minimum qualifications to work as unemployment insurance claim adjudicators, to participate in the annual trainings.

By October 1, 2021, and each year thereafter, ESD must provide a report to the Legislature on the number of persons with current adjudicator certifications.

Legislative findings are made.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 13, 2021.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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