

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5777

As of January 8, 2024

Title: An act relating to unemployment insurance benefits for striking or lockout workers.

Brief Description: Concerning unemployment insurance benefits for striking or lockout workers.

Sponsors: Senators Keiser, Conway, Lovick, Valdez, Trudeau, Shewmake, Randall, Van De Wege, Dhingra, Stanford, Hasegawa, Nguyen, Hunt, Kauffman, Lias and Frame.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Commerce: 1/09/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Deletes a provision that disqualifies employees in a multi-employer bargaining unit from unemployment insurance benefits when the employees have been locked out following a strike against the employers in the bargaining unit.
- Modifies the period of disqualification from unemployment insurance benefits for striking workers to end at the earlier of the Sunday following the first day of the strike or at the end of the strike.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Staff: Susan Jones (786-7404)

Background: Unemployment Insurance Benefits. The Employment Security Department administers Washington State's unemployment insurance program. An unemployed individual is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits (UI benefits) if the individual:

- worked at least 680 hours in the base year;

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- was separated from employment through no fault of the claimant's or quit work for good cause; and
- is able to work, available to work, and is actively searching for suitable work.

A claimant must be unemployed for a one-week waiting period before being eligible for UI benefits.

Certain benefit payments are not charged to the experience rating accounts of employers paying contributions to the unemployment insurance program (contributing paying employers).

Disqualification from Unemployment Insurance Benefits During Strike or Lockout. An individual is disqualified from UI benefits when the individual's unemployment is:

- due to a strike at the factory, establishment, or other premises where the individual is or was last employed; or
- due to a lockout by the employer who is a member of a multi-employer bargaining unit and who has locked out the employees at the factory, establishment, or other premises where the individual is or was last employed after one member of the multi-employer bargaining unit has been struck by its employees as a result of the multi-employer bargaining process.

The disqualification does not apply if:

- the individual is not participating in or financing or directly interested in the strike or lockout that caused the unemployment; and
- the individual does not belong to a grade or class of workers of which, immediately before the strike or lockout, there were members employed at the premises where the strike or lockout occurs, any of whom are participating in or financing or directly interested in the strike or lockout.

The disqualification ends when the strike or lockout is terminated.

Summary of Bill: The provision that disqualifies employees in a multi-employer bargaining unit from UI benefits when the employees have been locked out following a strike against the employers in the bargaining unit is deleted.

Disqualification for striking workers ends at the earlier of the Sunday following:

- the first day of the strike; or
- at the end of the strike.

The individual is subject to the one week waiting period.

Contribution paying employers experience rating accounts are not charged for UI benefits paid where the individual's unemployment is due to a strike at the separating employer's premises where the individual is or was last employed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on December 28, 2023.

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

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