

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1605

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to the establishment of a state patrol longevity bonus.

Brief Description: Concerning the establishment of a state patrol longevity bonus.

Sponsors: Representatives Fey, Barkis, Leavitt, Shavers, Bronoske, Schmidt, Ormsby, Davis and Timmons.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/3/25, 2/6/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires a longevity bonus be paid to Washington State Patrol employees that achieved 26 or more years of commissioned service before July 1, 2024.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Bernbaum, Vice Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Low, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Mendoza, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schmidt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Dent, Duerr, Entenman, Griffey, Hunt, Klicker, Ley, Nance, Orcutt, Paul, Ramel, Richards, Stuebe, Taylor, Timmons, Volz, Wylie and Zahn.

Staff: Sandy Myer (786-7140).

Background:

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 Washington State Patrol (WSP) is responsible for traffic law enforcement, collision investigation, criminal interdiction, terrorism prevention, and motorist assistance on the interstate and state highway systems. Commissioned staff include a field force of 683 trooper positions and an estimated 250 commissioned nonfield force positions supported by the transportation budget. As of November 2024 the estimated vacancy rate was about 23 percent.

The Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS) is the retirement plan available to commissioned WSP employees. Members of the WSPRS can retire at age 55 after 5 years of service or at any age after 25 years of service. Years of service are calculated relative to the date the employee began service. Members are subject to mandatory retirement at age 65 unless they are serving as the Chief of the WSP.

Compensation and personnel matters for troopers are collectively bargained between the state and the troopers' exclusive bargaining representative.

In 2024 the Legislature established the WSP longevity bonus program (bonus program) whereby eligible commissioned employees who have completed 26 or more years of service are qualified for an annual \$15,000 longevity bonus on the employee's anniversary date of state employment. The bonus program was created effective July 1, 2024. The bonus is paid in four equal quarterly payments. The bonus program expires June 30, 2029.

Summary of Bill:

Eligibility for the bonus program is expanded to include commissioned employees who completed 26 or more years of service before July 1, 2024, and who have been continuously employed by the WSP for at least one year.

Under the expansion, an individual qualifies to receive a one-time retention incentive of \$3,750 for each quarter the employee was continuously employed between the date the law went into effect and the employee's anniversary date. These one-time retention incentive payments must be completed no later than June 30, 2025.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Recruitment has been an on-going issue for the WSP and the Legislature has passed laws that have been helpful in keeping staff. The sign-on bonus for House Bill 1638 has been going really well. In 2024, House Bill 2357 in regards to the longevity bonus, required that a \$15,000 bonus be paid to eligible commissioned WSP employees for 26 years of service. There was a difference of interpretation and a third were not eligible to start the program. New language has been worked on that will impact 123 senior troopers that will stick around with the passage of this bill. With good faith many troopers have stayed on.

Staffing has continued to be a significant challenge and this bill will reward those who stick around. More officers on the road means more safety and less lives lost.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Jake Fey, prime sponsor; Spike Unruh, Washington State Patrol Troopers Association; and Will Stellmacher, Washington State Patrol Lieutenants and Captains Association (WSPLCA).

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.