

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5972

As Reported by House Committee On:
Labor & Workplace Standards

Title: An act relating to expanding the definition of uniformed personnel regarding correctional officers for purposes of interest arbitration.

Brief Description: Expanding the definition of uniformed personnel regarding correctional officers for purposes of interest arbitration.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Stanford, Conway and Hasegawa).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Labor & Workplace Standards: 2/18/26, 2/20/26 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Expands interest arbitration to correctional employees of city or county jails by removing the provision limiting interest arbitration to correctional employees employed by a county with a population of 70,000 or more.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Berry, Chair; Fosse, Vice Chair; Scott, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, McEntire, Obras and Ortiz-Self.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

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.

Background:

Employees of cities, counties, and other political subdivisions of the state bargain their wages and working conditions under the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA). For certain uniformed personnel, the PECBA requires binding interest arbitration if negotiations for a contract reach an impasse and cannot be resolved through mediation. Under interest arbitration, an impartial third party makes decisions regarding the unresolved terms of the contract. There are statutory procedures for parties to select arbitrators, and factors the arbitration panel must consider when making its decision.

Uniformed personnel include, among others, correctional employees who are uniformed and non-uniformed, commissioned and noncommissioned security personnel employed in a jail by a county with a population of 70,000 or more. Other correctional employees with interest arbitration include those employed in regional jails and in juvenile detention facilities that are located in a county with a population over 1.5 million.

Summary of Bill:

The limitation requiring correctional employees of jails to be employed by a county with a population of more than 70,000 to be eligible for interest arbitration is removed. Correctional employees who are uniformed and non-uniformed, commissioned and noncommissioned security personnel employed in a jail are eligible for interest arbitration.

Appropriation: None.**Fiscal Note:** Available.**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The population threshold requirement for interest arbitration is arbitrary. This inequity undermines the important work of corrections officers in smaller jurisdictions. This bill ensures all correctional officers are treated the same regarding access to a fair and impartial process to settle labor disputes. It is not fair if correctional employees in the county jail have interest arbitration and the correctional employees in the city jail do not.

(Opposed) This bill disproportionately impacts smaller and rural counties. The bill should be amended to require the arbitrator to consider the financial ability of the county employer to pay and to provide that the arbitrator's decision is not binding on the county. These

provisions exist for the Legislature and should be extended to local government. City jails could end up closing or relying more on county facilities, which would result in reduced access to local services.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Carl Keller, Teamsters Local 760; and Michael Rainey, AFSCME Council 2.

(Opposed) Jay Arnold, Kirkland City Councilmember; and Travis Dutton, Washington State Association of Counties.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.