

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5972

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As Passed Senate, February 4, 2026

**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 & Commerce: 1/16/26, 1/23/26 [DPS, DNP, w/oRec].

**Floor Activity:** Passed Senate: 2/4/26, 34-15.

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

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

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5972 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Saldaña, Chair; Alvarado, Vice Chair; Conway, Vice Chair; Hunt, MacEwen and Stanford.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Schoesler.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

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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.*

Signed by Senators King, Ranking Member; Braun.

**Staff:** Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

**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 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 non-commissioned 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.

In addition to the other requirements, correctional employees, to be eligible for interest arbitration, must be trained for, and charged with the responsibility of controlling and maintaining custody of inmates in the jail and safeguarding inmates from other inmates.

**Summary of First Substitute Bill:** The limitation that requires 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 non-commissioned security personnel employed in a jail are eligible for interest arbitration.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill:** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: People performing the same job should be treated the same and have consistent training and safety regardless of employer. The bill eliminates the distinction between larger entities and smaller ones. Correctional officers in small jurisdictions do not have same rights as others and that has created unsafe conditions. The bill recognizes the essential role that all correctional officers play in our communities.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Derek Stanford, Prime Sponsor; David Simmons, Teamsters Local 760; Carl Keller, Teamsters Local 760; Michael Rainey, Washington State Council of County and City Employees.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.