
Commerce & Labor Committee

HB 2642

Brief Description: Requiring volunteer fire fighters to notify their employers of their volunteer service.

Sponsors: Representatives Hurst and Haigh.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Bars a volunteer fire fighter from filing a complaint or bringing an action for wrongful discharge or discipline because of leave taken related to a fire or an emergency unless the volunteer fire fighter notified his or her employer of his or her volunteer service.

Hearing Date: 2/4/02

Staff: Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

Background:

In Washington, the general rule is that employment is "terminable at-will." In other words, an employer may discharge an employee at any time without cause, and an employee may quit employment at any time without cause. Similarly, an employer may take other employment action that he or she deems appropriate. Exceptions to these general rules have been enacted by Congress and the Legislature and recognized by Washington courts.

One exception recently enacted by the Legislature involves volunteer fire fighters. This exception prohibits an employer of 20 or more employees from discharging or disciplining a volunteer fire fighter because of leave related to a fire or an emergency. A volunteer fire fighter who believes he or she was wrongly discharged or disciplined because of such leave may file a complaint with the director of the Department of Labor and Industries. In some circumstances, the volunteer fire fighter also may bring an action against his or her employer.

Summary of Bill:

A volunteer fire fighter may not file a complaint or bring an action for wrongful discharge or discipline because of leave taken related to a fire or an emergency unless he or she notified his or her employer of his or her volunteer service. The volunteer fire fighter must have

given such notice within a reasonable time of accepting employment or beginning his or her volunteer service.

A technical correction is made.

Rule Authority: The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making powers of an agency.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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