

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5310

---

---

As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, February 25, 2005

**Title:** An act relating to prohibiting the employment security department from asking claimants about household spending.

**Brief Description:** Prohibiting surveys of unemployment insurance claimants.

**Sponsors:** Senators Johnson, Roach, Swecker, Schoesler, Stevens and Hewitt.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 2/10/05, 2/25/05 [DPS].

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5310 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Parlette, Ranking Minority Member; Honeyford, Keiser and Prentice.

**Staff:** Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

**Background:** Since 2002, at the request of several legislators, the Employment Security Department (ESD) has conducted the annual Claimant Expenditure Survey (CES). The purpose of this survey is to explore how unemployment compensation returns to the economy through an analysis of claimant household expenditures. The CES is designed to be compared to the national Consumer Expenditure Survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The CES asks participants to record their marital status and the number of people living in their household that were part of their family unit, as well as the total household income for a particular month. They are also asked for their expenditures for that month in nine categories: housing, food, transportation, credit card and loan payments, health, entertainment, apparel and services, education, and miscellaneous. Participants are also asked to record any money put into savings or investments during that survey month.

The CES is strictly voluntary and the results are kept confidential. These facts are noted on both the survey instrument as well as in all correspondence related to the survey.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** Any time ESD surveys a current or past unemployment insurance recipient, it must include on both the survey instrument as well as any accompanying correspondence that participation in the survey is entirely voluntary.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** Requires ESD to make clear that participating in a survey is voluntary.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** This survey represents an invasion of the privacy of the individuals who receive the survey. Some of these individuals believe they must answer the survey or their unemployment insurance benefits will be affected.

**Testimony Against:** This survey provides important information on how well UI recipients do under the current benefit structure. It provides information for policy makers and the public that assist in determining how well the UI system is doing in wage replacement and how well ESD is doing serving its customers. Some concern that the broad language of the bill would prohibit ESD from conducting other types of surveys it currently conducts.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Senator Stephen Johnson, prime sponsor.

CON: Jerry Iyall, Employment Security Department; Bob Wagner, Employment Security Department; Jeff Johnson, Washington State Labor Council.