

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1959

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Commerce & Labor*

Title: An act relating to collective bargaining for local government correctional and radio dispatch employees.

Brief Description: Revising provisions for collective bargaining for local government correctional and radio dispatch employees.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Hargrove, Winsley and Heavey.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Commerce & Labor, March 5, 1991, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE & LABOR**

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 1959 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 9 members: Representatives Heavey, Chair; Cole, Vice Chair; Lisk, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Franklin; Jones; R. King; O'Brien; Prentice; and Wilson.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 2 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Ranking Minority Member and Vance.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7117).

Background: Employees of cities and counties bargain their wages and working conditions under the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act. If a contract dispute cannot be resolved through mediation, the act requires the use of binding interest arbitration for disputes between law enforcement officers and employers in cities with a population of 15,000 or more or in counties of the second class or larger, 70,000 or more in population. Law enforcement officers include county sheriffs and deputy sheriffs, city police officers, or town marshals.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The binding interest arbitration provisions of the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act are extended to the correctional employees and police, fire, emergency, and correctional radio dispatch

personnel employed by cities with a population of 15,000 or more and by counties of the second class or larger.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The coverage of radio dispatch personnel for binding arbitration is limited to cover only police, fire, emergency, and correctional radio dispatch personnel.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Correctional officers and emergency dispatch personnel are part of the public safety team. They all use the same professional judgment with respect to emergency situations, whether they are dispatchers or enforcement personnel. Unresolved disputes with these employees are not in the public interest. Binding arbitration is fair and not more costly than other dispute resolution alternatives.

Testimony Against: These employees have full collective bargaining rights now. Binding arbitration has only been required in the past for "uniformed personnel" where the public policy against strikes is the strongest. These provisions should not be expanded to cover "civilians." When binding arbitration is part of the process, negotiations are less productive. The process is expensive and it takes the local jurisdiction's budget out of the hands of elected officials. Allocation of scarce resources should be made by the officials, not by a third party. It would be acceptable to require a mediation and fact-finding process, rather than binding arbitration. It is not clear who is covered by a "radio dispatcher" in this bill.

Witnesses: (in favor): Dustin Frederick and Tony Vivenzio, Service Employees' International Union. (opposed): Kathleen Collins, Association of Washington Cities; George Walk, Pierce County; and Ron Main, King County.