

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2128

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

**Title:** An act relating to health and safety in the office environment.

**Brief Description:** Requiring the director of labor and industries to adopt health and safety standards that address the office environment.

**Sponsor(s):** Representatives Cole, Prentice, Braddock, Orr and Franklin.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Commerce & Labor, February 28, 1991, DPS.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
COMMERCE & LABOR**

**Majority Report:** *That Substitute House Bill No. 2128 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.*  
Signed by 10 members: Representatives Heavey, Chair; Cole, Vice Chair; Fuhrman, Ranking Minority Member; Lisk, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Franklin; Jones; R. King; O'Brien; Prentice; and Vance.

**Staff:** Chris Cordes (786-7117).

**Background:** The increasing use of video display terminals in the workplace has raised concerns about the health and safety of employees working in the office environment. For example, research conducted at the University of Washington in 1989 evaluated the effects of video display terminal use on musculoskeletal and vision health. The report concluded that certain activities created a higher risk of symptoms, particularly hand and arm symptoms. The report suggested that office work standards and employee training programs should include consideration of work practices and physical factors at the workstation.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The Department of Labor and Industries, in rules adopted under the authority of the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act, must provide standards addressing employment in the office environment,

including standards for employee training and the use ergonomic principles.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The substitute bill revises the Department of Labor and Industries' authority to adopt safety standards for the office environment by deleting the criteria involving "organization of job duties, methods, or practices" and "office design."

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** (on House Bill 1680) The bill proposes that the Department of Labor and Industries set up a rule-making process that can involve all of the parties, to work out the standards for protecting employees who work with video display terminals. These standards are needed, as studies have shown. Repetitive workplace injuries are increasing rapidly and preventive work must begin on a wider scale. The bill could be broadened to include the office environment, but it may be best to start with these standards before trying to cover other workplaces.

**Testimony Against:** (on House Bill 1680) Although the problems are recognized, the bill singles out video display terminals when the issue is a much broader one. Safety standards should address the whole office environment and other work places with documented repetitive motion problems. The department has authority now to adopt rules. Training and education should be the focus.

**Witnesses:** (in favor) Susan Johnson, Service Employees International Union; Steve Cant, Department of Labor and Industries; and Chuck Bailey, Washington State Labor Council. (opposed) Richard Hirsch and Barbara Kommer, American Electronics Association.