

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**ESHB 1599**

**AS OF MARCH 25, 1991**

**Brief Description:** Providing additional unemployment insurance benefits and training for certain lumber and wood products workers.

**SPONSORS:** House Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives Basich, Hargrove, Jones, Sheldon, Riley, P. Johnson, Bowman, Belcher, Cole, Brumsickle, Kremen, R. Johnson, Heavey, Morris, H. Myers, Peery, Rayburn, Jacobsen, R. King, Inslee, G. Fisher, Roland, Phillips, Orr, Cooper, Rasmussen and Spanel).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR**

**Staff:** Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

**Hearing Dates:** March 27, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

In Washington, unemployment benefits are available to claimants for a maximum of 30 weeks. Additional weeks of benefits, funded by a match of federal and state funds, are available only if the state economic condition reaches certain "triggers." The triggers depend on the economic status of the state as a whole. Economically distressed areas in the state cannot trigger in separately. There is currently no state-funded additional benefit program.

In some heavily timber-dependent areas of the state, the economic conditions within the county and the county unemployment rate are significantly worse than the state average.

**SUMMARY:**

An unemployment insurance additional benefit program is established for lumber and wood products employees and for employees in counties that have lumber and wood products employment at least twice the state average and an unemployment rate that is at least 20 percent higher than the state average. The program may not accept new claims after July 3, 1993.

A qualifying claimant who exhausts his or her regular benefits, maximum of 30 weeks, may receive additional benefits for a maximum total of 52 weeks of benefits. The additional

benefits are not charged to the experience rating account of the individual employer.

To qualify for additional benefits, the claimant must reside in or have worked in an eligible county at the time of last separation from employment, or must have earned wages in at least 680 hours of lumber and wood products employment. In addition, the claimant must be unlikely to return to his or her previous employment because the work opportunities have been substantially reduced, and must enter and make satisfactory progress in a training program. The claimant must develop a training plan and submit the plan to the Employment Security Department for approval within 60 days of being notified of the additional benefits program and must begin the approved training within 90 days of termination from employment or within 90 days of the effective date of the act, whichever is later, unless training is not available, in which case the claimant must enter training as soon as it is available. Training must be in a public institution of higher education or at a vocational school authorized by law to provide skills training or education beyond secondary education. Training may not include on-the-job training under which the claimant is paid by the employer.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** available

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 1991.