

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2300

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE, FEBRUARY 23, 1994

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to offender eligibility for unemployment compensation benefits.

SPONSORS: Representatives Morris, Padden, Long, King and Brough; by request of Department of Corrections and Employment Security Department

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Moore, Chairman; Prentice, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Deccio, Fraser, McAuliffe, Newhouse, Prince, Sellar, Sutherland, Vognild and Wojahn.

Staff: Patrick Woods (786-7430)

Hearing Dates: February 23, 1994

BACKGROUND:

The Division of Correctional Industries develops and implements programs designed to offer inmates employment, work experience and training, and to reduce the tax burden of corrections. Products and services provided by Correctional Industries' programs are offered to the public, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and the correctional system. The Division of Correctional Industries operates five classes of work programs. "Class I: Free Venture Industries" allows private sector companies to set up factories within the corrections institutions. Inmates who work in Class I Free Venture Industries must be paid a wage comparable to the wage paid for similar work in the locality as determined by the director. If the director cannot reasonably determine the comparable wage, then the pay shall be not less than the federal minimum wage.

In general, an incarcerated individual is disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits because he or she is not available for work. However, a worker who is on standby status with an employer is not required to be available for other work in order to receive benefits. Therefore, it is possible that an incarcerated individual could be eligible to receive unemployment benefits.

SUMMARY:

References in the law to the inmate work program are changed to "offender work program" and the participants are referred to as "offenders."

An offender who is employed in the Class I Program of Correctional Industries is ineligible for unemployment compensation benefits until he or she is released on parole or discharged.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

References to "offenders" are deleted and the term "inmate" is reinserted.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

The bill will clarify that inmates are not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits while incarcerated.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Graeme Sackrison, ESD; Janeen Wadsworth, DOC; Jim King, RESTEC