

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1583

As Reported By House Committee On:

Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to discharge of employees.

Brief Description: Requiring that employers provide discharged employees with a written statement of the reasons for the discharge.

Sponsors: Representatives Blalock, Conway, Cooper, Keiser, Morris, Wood, Gombosky, Dunshee, Mason, Veloria, Butler, Dickerson, Kenney, Tokuda, O'Brien, Linville and Constantine.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/12/97, 3/5/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives McMorris, Chairman; Honeyford, Vice Chairman; Conway, Ranking Minority Member; Wood, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt; Clements; Cole; Hatfield and Lisk.

Staff: Selwyn Walters (786-7117).

Background: The Legislature has declared the welfare of the state demands that all employees be protected from the pernicious effect of inadequate working conditions. The director of the Department of Labor and Industries is authorized to supervise the administration and enforcement of laws respecting the wages and conditions of employment of employees in business and industry.

The director has authority to promulgate rules fixing standards, conditions, and hours of labor for the safety, health, and welfare of employees. Through rule, the Department of Labor and Industries has declared that upon an employee's written request, an employer must provide a discharged employee with a written statement of the reasons for discharge. The statement must contain the effective date of the discharge, and must be given to the employee within 10 working days after the written request.

The department furnishes employers with a poster describing an employee's rights and an employer's obligations regarding employment standards, conditions of employment, and hours of labor. The employer must display the poster in a conspicuous place accessible to employees.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The department must incorporate into any current wage and hour poster provided to employers information stating that upon the written request of a discharged employee, an employer has an obligation to furnish the employee, within 10 working days of the request, a signed written statement of the reasons for the employee's discharge and the effective date of the discharge.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill changes the procedure by which employees are notified that they have a right to a discharge notice.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill is about justice. It is not too much to ask an employer to give a discharged employee written reasons for the discharge. A written discharge notice makes it easier for an employee to find work, and lets the employee know why he or she was discharged. The bill ensures clarity and fairness.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Rod Blalock, prime sponsor; and Robby Stern, Washington State Labor Council.