

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6158

As Passed Senate, February 14, 2000

Title: An act relating to occupational diseases affecting fire fighters.

Brief Description: Creating a presumption of occupational disease for fire fighters.

Sponsors: Senators Fairley, Prentice, Goings, Costa, McAuliffe, Gardner, Franklin, Kline and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Workforce Development: 1/25/2000, 2/3/2000 [DP, DNP]. Passed Senate, 2/14/2000, 41-6.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kline and Wojahn.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Hochstatter.

Staff: Jack Brummel (786-7428)

Background: Fire fighters are exposed to extreme heat and cold, smoke, fumes, and toxic or chemical substances at a much higher rate than the general population. Many states have statutes which create a presumption that certain illnesses suffered by fire fighters are occupational diseases for industrial insurance purposes. In 1987, the Legislature created a rebuttable presumption that respiratory diseases in fire fighters is occupationally related.

Summary of Bill: A rebuttable presumption is established that a fire fighter's heart problem is an occupational disease if it is experienced within 24 hours of exposure to smoke, fumes, and toxic or chemical substances. Atrial fibrillations are specifically included among such heart problems.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: To experience fibrillations while in the act of fighting a fire and not have it covered by workers' compensation is not right. Fire fighters are under stress.

Testimony Against: This will create a special group with privileges that others don't have. This will burden municipalities that are self-insured with extra costs. Fire fighters are well protected going into fires, and the current system will cover situations like this.

Testified: PRO: Kelly Fox, Charles Hawkins, Joe Robinson, Washington State Council of Firefighters; Robby Stern, Washington State Labor Council; CON: Dr. Isaac Pope, City of Chehalis; Don Keenan, City of Bellingham.