

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1371

As Reported by House Committee On:
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to participation in health care authority insurance plans and contracts by surviving spouses and dependent children of emergency service personnel killed in the line of duty.

Brief Description: Allowing participation in health care authority insurance plans and contracts by surviving spouses and dependent children of emergency service personnel killed in the line of duty.

Sponsors: Representatives Morell, O'Brien, Woods, Bush, Cooper, Haigh, Simpson, Armstrong, Ahern, Lovick, Marine, Anderson, Pearson, Benson, Keiser, Conway, Hurst, Santos and Campbell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/8/01, 2/20/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Permits surviving spouses and children of "emergency service personnel" killed in the line of duty to purchase health care benefits from the Public Employees' Benefits Board.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Sehlin, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Barlean, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; Lisk, Republican Vice Chair; Alexander, Benson, Boldt, Clements, Cody, Cox, Dunshee, Fromhold, Gombosky, Grant, Kagi, Keiser, Kenney, Kessler, Lambert, Linville, Mastin, McIntire, Mulliken, Pearson, Pflug, Ruderman, D. Schmidt, Schual-Berke, Talcott and Tokuda.

Staff: Andrea Hardy (786-7349).

Background:

Retired or disabled employees of the state, school districts, counties, cities, and other political subdivisions may purchase health care benefits from the Public Employees' Benefits Board. This coverage is purchased at full cost based on a risk pool, and it includes an additional administrative fee for each participant. Participants eligible for Medicare parts A and B are placed in one risk pool. All other retired or disabled participants are placed in a risk pool with active employees. Both groups are charged based on the per capita costs incurred by the appropriate risk pool, minus a subsidy in the case of Medicare eligible participants.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Surviving spouses and children of emergency service personnel killed in the line of duty may purchase health care benefits from the Public Employees' Benefits Board. "Emergency service personnel" means members of the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement system and members of the Volunteer Fire Fighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pensions system.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill included in the definition of "emergency service personnel" as Washington State Patrol officers, Department of Fish and Wildlife enforcement officers, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission enforcement officers, Washington State Liquor Control Board enforcement officers, and Gambling Commission enforcement officers. The substitute bill removes reference to these groups because they are already eligible for Public Employees' Benefits Board health coverage.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except section 2, which takes effect March 1, 2002.

Testimony For: When emergency services personnel are killed in the line of duty, their families need health care coverage. The survivors are allowed 18 months of COBRA and then must either pay expensive health care premiums or go without coverage. State provided health care coverage would be beneficial because many small police and fire departments cannot afford to provide coverage to the survivors of emergency service personnel killed in the line of duty.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Morell, prime sponsor; Mike Matson, Washington State Law Enforcement Association; Ike Ikerd and Lynn McKennor, Washington Public Employees Association; Ben Reisz, Sumner Police Department; Gail Frink Schultz, Lori Brown, Jolin Lowry, and Helen Carlstrom, Concerns of Police Survivors; Dick Warbrouck, Retired Firefighters of Washington; Brigitte K. Smith, Board for Volunteer Firefighters; Eric Robertson, Washington State Patrol; and Ron Main, Seattle and King County Police Guilds.