

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5777

As Reported by House Committee On:

Health Care

Title: An act relating to health care benefits for retirees of local government employers.

Brief Description: Permitting retired and disabled employees to obtain health insurance.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Winsley, Thibaudeau, Deccio and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 3/27/01, 3/29/01 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Retirees and disabled employees from local government and other political subdivisions will be permitted to continue their coverage under a health plan established by their employer.
- Retirees and disabled employees will be responsible for paying the full cost of the health plan.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Campbell, Republican Co-Chair; Cody, Democratic Co-Chair; Schual-Berke, Democratic Vice Chair; Skinner, Republican Vice Chair; Alexander, Ballasiotes, Conway, Darneille, Edmonds, Edwards, Marine, McMorris, Pennington and Ruderman.

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

Local government employees are covered by the state Health Care Authority if their employer contracts with the state Health Care Authority for such coverage.

Under certain conditions, local government employees covered by the state Health Care

Authority may continue their participation in the insurance plans of their employer after they retire or are disabled. Such retired or disabled employees are responsible for paying their own premiums, but the premiums charged must be developed from the same experience pool as active employees.

Local government employees not covered by the state Health Care Authority have no other right under state law to continue to participate in the insurance plans of their employer after they retire or are disabled.

Summary of Bill:

With some exceptions and under certain conditions, retired or disabled local government employees not covered by the state Health Care Authority must be allowed to continue participation in their employer's health insurance program.

Local governments may require a retired or disabled person who requests continued participation in its health plan to pay the full cost of such participation, including any amounts necessary for administration.

If a person continuing insurance coverage becomes eligible for Medicare, the coverage terminates but the person has the option of participating in a supplemental plan provided by the employer.

Other conditions are established regarding, among other things, enrollment periods, coordination of benefits with a participant's other medical coverage, and coverage of dependents if the retired or disabled employee dies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2002.

Testimony For: Retired or disabled local government employees should be allowed to continue health coverage through their former employer. They will pay the full cost of their health care.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: John O'Brien and Mary Anne Fast, Retired Public Employees Council; Bruce Reeves, Senior Citizens' Lobby; Georgette Logan; Gail McComb; Larry Montgomery, Amalgamated Transit Union; and Vicki Kirkpatrick, Washington Association of Counties.

