

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2401

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 27, 2002

Title: An act relating to assaults to employees of the department of natural resources.

Brief Description: Reimbursing employees of the department of natural resources who are victims of assault.

Sponsors: Representatives Doumit, Eickmeyer, Rockefeller, Sump, Jackley, Pearson, Ericksen, Hatfield, Chase, Edwards, McDermott and Haigh; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/20/02, 2/27/02 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Carlson, Franklin, Hewitt, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Long and Stevens.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: For nearly 50 years, employees of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have supervised crews of adult and juvenile offenders working on a variety of projects on state lands, ranging from replanting forests to picking up litter, fighting forest fires, restoring streams, building recreation sites, etc. The work is the result of a partnership between DNR, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Corrections (DOC).

DSHS and DOC have for many years recognized that their employees are at risk of being assaulted by the offenders they supervise. Current law allows these agency employees to be eligible for reimbursement supplementing the industrial insurance compensation benefits they may be eligible for if they miss work as the result of an injury from an inmate assault. DNR employees who supervise the same offenders are not currently eligible for these additional benefits.

Industrial insurance benefits typically only cover a portion of the employee's salary. DSHS and DOC employees who miss work as the result of an inmate assault receive industrial insurance benefits and the agency employing them makes up the difference between that amount and their full salary. The end result is that for up to 365 days, a DSHS or DOC employee may receive their full salary. Employees claiming these benefits must satisfy certain criteria to be eligible.

Summary of Bill: DNR staff who supervise juvenile or adult offenders are eligible to receive the same benefits that DSHS and DOC staff may receive if they are injured by an offender assault. For up to 365 days from the date of the injury, the employing agency may supplement the employee's industrial insurance benefits up to the amount of the employee's full salary.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill is important to our employees and to the agency. We have had employees injured; we support it.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Vicki Christiansen, Department of Natural Resources.