

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2985

As Reported by House Committee On: Health Care

Title: An act relating to health insurance for retired and disabled public employees.

Brief Description: Providing for individual health insurance for retired and disabled public employees.

Sponsors: Representatives Cody, Campbell, Kenney, Dickerson and Rockefeller.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 2/3/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- If political subdivisions are unable to offer their retirees and disabled employees access to group insurance coverage they must assist them in applying for individual health insurance.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Bailey, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Campbell, Clibborn, Darneille, Moeller, Rodne, Schual-Berke and Skinner.

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

In 2002, the Legislature enacted legislation requiring political subdivisions to offer retirees and disabled employees access to group health insurance coverage. The legislation took effect on January 1, 2003, but political subdivisions were allowed up to one year from this date to come into compliance. The legislation established a mandate for the political subdivision to offer access to health coverage, but did not require health carriers to offer such coverage. Following the passage of the legislation in 2002, health carriers have declined to offer group policies for public retirees and disabled employees, and political subdivisions have not been able to offer any alternatives to their retirees or disabled employees.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

If political subdivisions are unable to offer access to group health insurance for their retirees and disabled employees they must assist their retirees and disabled employees in applying for individual health benefit plans. The Office of the Insurance Commissioner and carriers that offer individual health benefit plans will help political subdivisions meet this obligation by developing standardized information on the availability and cost of individual health benefit plans, application packages, and health benefit fairs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Individuals covered by the Washington Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters Retirement System Plan 2 are included in the group of public retirees who will be assisted in finding health insurance coverage.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.