

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5150

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to marine pilot licensing qualifications and procedures.

Brief Description: Changing provisions concerning marine pilot licensing qualifications and procedures.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Swecker and Jacobsen; by request of Board of Pilotage Commissioners).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 3/22/05, 3/23/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a training license for the licensing of marine pilots.
- Requires a U.S. pilotage endorsement at the time of training, rather than at the time of initial application, beginning July 1, 2008.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Wallace, Vice Chair; Woods, Ranking Minority Member; Skinner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Campbell, Dickerson, Flannigan, Hankins, Hudgins, Jarrett, Kilmer, Lovick, Morris, Nixon, Schindler, Simpson, B. Sullivan, Takko, Upthegrove and Wood.

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7347).

Background:

Under current law, the Board of Pilotage Commissioners (Board) is charged with providing for the maintenance of efficient and competent pilotage service on the waters of the Puget Sound pilotage district and the Grays Harbor pilotage district. To this end, the Board examines the proficiency of potential pilots, licenses pilots, enforces the use of pilots, sets pilotage rates, investigates reported accidents involving pilots, keeps records of various matters affecting pilotage, and performs various other duties as required by law.

Pilot applicants must pass a written and oral examination administered and graded by the Board. The Board must hold examinations at such times as will, in the Board's judgment,

ensure the maintenance of an efficient and competent pilotage service. The last pilot examination was conducted in 1996.

As of December 31, 2003, there were 51 state-licensed pilots serving the Puget Sound pilotage district and two state-licensed pilots serving the Grays Harbor pilotage district, one of whom is under contract with the Port of Grays Harbor.

Summary of Bill:

The Board must establish a comprehensive pilot training program. Pilot applicants must be evaluated and ranked based on certain criteria for entry into the training program. When the Board determines that the demand for pilots requires entry of an applicant into the training program, it must issue a trainee license to the applicant. The trainee license permits the trainee to do such actions as are specified in the trainee program. After the completion of the training program, the Board must evaluate the trainee's performance and knowledge for the purpose of potentially issuing a full pilot license to that applicant.

A person is eligible to be licensed as a pilot if, among other things, the person: (1) is a U.S. citizen; (2) over 25 years old and under 75 years old; (3) a Washington resident at the time of licensure; (4) holds, at the time of application, a specified federal license to operate certain vessels, and holds at the time of licensure (or at the time of application if before July 1, 2008) a U.S. pilotage endorsement for the pilotage district in which the applicant desires to be licensed; and (5) successfully completes a Board-specified training program.

Certain liability protection, currently available to state-licensed pilots, is made available to state-licensed pilot trainees.

Various other changes are made to the marine pilot licensing qualifications and procedures.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill. Fiscal note requested for substitute bill on 3/22/05.

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

Testimony For: In the past 20 years, ships are bigger, traffic is heavier, but the waterways are not bigger. We need to attract the best available mariners. We need to better evaluate, select and train pilot candidates. The federal endorsement requires an extremely laborious process and limits the number of applicants. After pilots pass the exam and are ranked they are placed on the list of eligible for licensure. Many stay on this list for years. The proposed changes would allow taking the exam without getting federal pilotage endorsement, consideration of actual ship handling skills and local knowledge, and consideration of factors other than test scores in ranking persons eligible for licensure. The current system rewards good test takers, and not ship handling skills. The bill would allow a supervised program of intense training. No pilot aspirant would be on the list for more than four years. In this

climate of increasing security, the issuance of a training license will help control entry to ships.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Charles Davis, Washington Board of Pilotage Commissioners.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.