

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5150

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 22, 2005

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

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

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Swecker and Jacobsen; by request of Board of Pilotage Commissioners.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/21/05, 2/22/05 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5150 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Benson, Eide, Esser, Kastama, Mulliken, Oke, Spanel and Weinstein.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

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 Substitute 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) is over 25 years old and under 75 years old; (3) is 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Significant changes in shipping have occurred in recent years. Shipping systems are becoming more improved and complex. These changes warrant an update to marine pilot recruitment and training procedures in order to ensure a qualified applicant pool. Under this bill, the Board could more accurately assess whether an applicant is qualified by weighing selection criteria individually against the applicant, rather than just relying on a written test as is the case now. The bill provides authority for the Board to improve its training program with more individualized testing, including through the use of simulators. Additionally, applicants can work toward obtaining a federal pilotage endorsement while participating in the state training program. The bill was prepared by stakeholders and will not reduce entry standards.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Mike Moore, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association; Jack Thompson, Port of Grays Harbor; Harry Dudley, Chair, Board of Pilotage Commissioners.