

## HB 2083 - DIGEST

Revises the industrial insurance self-insurance program.

Creates the workers' compensation ombudsprogram to facilitate the early and successful resolution of industrial insurance claims in an informal and cooperative environment which benefits the injured worker, the employer, and the department. To carry out its purpose, the ombudsprogram shall: (1) Provide accurate, timely, and objective information without charge to injured workers and employers covered under Title 51 RCW, including providing counseling on workers' and employers' rights and responsibilities and individual counseling on specific claims under this title;

(2) Work with the department to develop and implement solutions to common, recurring problems identified in the course of providing individual counseling under this act;

(3) Provide workshops and education programs for workers' compensation practitioners, worker representatives, employers, and other interested parties, covering issues such as proper claims filing procedures, workers' and employers' rights and responsibilities, and return-to-work requirements;

(4) As requested by labor or management, encourage and facilitate labor/management cooperation that promotes higher safety awareness, expedites return to work options, and reduces barriers between labor and management;

(5) Support department initiatives and programs designed to facilitate effective communication and conflict resolution for workers and employers;

(6) Maintain a tracking system, approved by the director or director's designee, that records the number and geographic location of claimants served, the issues encountered, and any other data identified by the ombudsperson;

(7) Develop and provide the director and the ombudsprogram advisory committee with an annual plan for completing the program's activities;

(8) Make reports on the program's activities to the director and the ombudsprogram advisory committee, as requested; and

(9) Make recommendations to the governor and director based on the program's activities and findings that address systemic and pervasive problems within the industrial insurance system. The department must review and report its response to the recommendations to the governor, legislature, ombudsprogram advisory committee, and workers' compensation advisory committee.