

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2626

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**As Passed House:**

February 18, 2008

**Title:** An act relating to authorizing the governor to suspend the waiting week for individuals who are unemployed because of an emergency or disaster.

**Brief Description:** Studying options for suspending the waiting week for individuals who are unemployed because of an emergency or disaster.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives VanDeWege, Kessler, Blake, Takko, DeBolt, Ormsby, Roberts, Kenney, Morrell, Simpson and Chase).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Commerce & Labor: 2/1/08, 2/5/08 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/18/08, 94-1.

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Employment Security Department to study options for suspending the waiting period requirement for individuals who are unemployed because of an emergency or disaster.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse, Green, Moeller and Williams.

**Staff:** Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

**Background:**

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

An individual is eligible to receive regular unemployment benefits if he or she: (1) worked at least 680 hours in his or her base year; (2) was separated from employment through no fault of his or her own or quit work for good cause; and (3) is able to work and is actively seeking employment. The individual also must have been unemployed for a waiting period of one week.

The one-week waiting period is required to receive federal reimbursement of one-half of benefits paid in the first week of extended unemployment benefits. The state "triggers on" to the extended benefits program during periods of high unemployment. The program begins the third week after a week for which there is an "on" indicator.

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**Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:**

The Employment Security Department is required to study options for suspending the waiting period requirement for individuals who are unemployed because of an emergency or disaster, and to examine ways to mitigate the impacts, if any, of these options on the unemployment compensation system. The Employment Security Department is also required to forward information from the Military Department about other means of assisting these individuals. A report from the Employment Security Department to appropriate legislative committees is due by December 1, 2008.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The wind, rainstorms, and floods in recent December were emotional events. Many people were displaced from work for only one week. Work to ensure that this proposal does not have adverse consequences is continuing.

(With concerns) There are concerns about this approach, and the potential loss of federal matching dollars when the state is on extended benefits. A separate appropriation may be a better choice in this circumstance.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Van De Wege, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Donna Steward, Association of Washington Business.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.