

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6246

As Passed House:

March 5, 2008

Title: An act relating to travel expenses for closed industrial insurance claims.

Brief Description: Authorizing travel expenses for closed industrial insurance claims.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research & Development (originally sponsored by Senator Honeyford).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/26/08, 2/28/08 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/5/08, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires injured workers be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses when travel is required in order to repair, replace, or alter a permanent mechanical appliance after closure of the claim.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: 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: Brian Considine (786-7290).

Background:

Industrial insurance is a no-fault state workers' compensation program that provides medical and partial wage replacement benefits to covered workers who are injured on the job or who develop an occupational disease. Employers must insure with the state fund administered by the Department of Labor and Industries (Department) or, if qualified, may self-insure.

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.

Under the Industrial Insurance Act, workers who, in the course of employment, are injured or suffer disability from an occupational disease receive certain benefits. With limited exceptions, an injured worker receives benefits until the claim is closed. Claims are generally closed when the injured worker's doctor or another physician certifies that further treatment will not improve the condition, the Department has no information showing further treatment is needed, or the injury was minor and treatment was successful.

The Department or self-insurers, by rule, must reimburse travel costs for health care treatment related to the claim when the injured worker is required to travel more than 10 miles one-way from his or her home, no other provider of the same type is available closer to the injured worker's home, and the claim manager has pre-authorized travel.

Mechanical appliances required as permanent equipment after treatment has been completed must continue to be provided or replaced without regard to the date of injury or the date treatment was completed.

Summary of Bill:

Injured workers must be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses when travel is required in order to repair, replace, or alter a prosthetic, orthotic, or similar permanent mechanical appliance after closure of the claim.

The reimbursement provisions do not cover travel for the repair or replacement of hearing-aid devices.

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) This bill came from a constituent who had his ankle crushed in an industrial accident and needs special shoes. The case is closed, but the individual has to travel to get fitted for new shoes, incurring transportation costs. The bill will just help cover some of the expenses for individuals needing to travel to get new medical appliances and the money for these reimbursements will come out of the medical aid fund.

(Neutral) This bill allows the Department to pay reasonable expenses for people who have to travel for their prosthetic or orthotic.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor.

(Neutral) Josh Swanson, Department of Labor and Industries.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.