

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6246

As Passed Senate, February 18, 2008

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

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

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 1/17/08, 2/05/08[DPS-WM, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 2/18/08, 46-2.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6246 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Franklin, Murray and Prentice.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; King.

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: Workers injured in the course of employment may receive various benefits under the Industrial Insurance Act, including payment for medical care directly related to the accident. With limited exceptions, an injured employee will continue to receive Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) benefits until the claim is closed. Claims are generally closed when the injured employee's doctor or another physician certifies that further treatment will not improve the condition, L&I has no information showing further treatment is needed, or the injury was minor and treatment was successful.

Travel costs for health care treatment related to the claim may be reimbursed when the injured worker is required to travel more than ten 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.

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.

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 Substitute 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.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute Bill: PRO: 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.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Robbie Stern, Washington State Labor Council.