

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1445

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 30, 2009

Title: An act relating to domestic partners under the Washington state patrol retirement system.

Brief Description: Providing benefits to domestic partners under the Washington state patrol retirement system.

Sponsors: House Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Representatives Simpson, O'Brien, Van De Wege, Goodman, Sullivan, Hunt, Ormsby, Conway and Santos).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/09, 60-35.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/26/09, 3/30/09 [DPA, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Marr, Vice Chair; Berkey, Eide, Jarrett, Kastama, Kauffman, Kilmer, King and Ranker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Swecker, Ranking Minority Member.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Becker.

Staff: Dory Nicpon (786-7321)

Background: Chapter 156 of the Laws of 2007 created a state domestic partnership registry at the Office of the Secretary of State, and extended certain property, probate, intestacy, and health care powers and rights to state-registered domestic partners.

The Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS) covers all commissioned officers of the Washington State Patrol, and pays certain retirement and death benefits to the surviving spouses of its members.

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.

The surviving spouse of a WSPRS member who is killed in the line of duty is eligible to purchase health care benefits from the Public Employees' Benefits Board (PEBB) and receive reimbursement for the cost of participating in the PEBB health insurance plan.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): “Domestic partners” are defined for purposes of the WSPRS as two adults that have registered as domestic partners according to the requirements of the State Registered Domestic Partnership Act.

Domestic partners are eligible for survivor and death benefits under the same circumstances as spouses from the WSPRS retirement system.

Domestic partners, as well as spouses and children, may apply for service credit for the period between the date that the member left service and the date of death where a member of WSPRS that left state employment died while serving in the Uniformed Services of the United States.

Domestic partners of WSPRS members are added to the list of survivors who are eligible to purchase health care benefits from PEBB, and receive reimbursement for the cost of participating in a PEBB health insurance plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 26, 2009.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill addresses an equity issue. The WSPRS is the only state retirement system that statutorily designates a surviving spouse, as opposed to a member-designated beneficiary, to receive certain retirement and death benefits.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Rick Jensen, Washington State Patrol Troopers Association; Captain Jeff DeVere, Washington State Patrol.