

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6775

As of January 29, 2010

Title: An act relating to creating a task force to study and report on the state's workers' compensation system.

Brief Description: Creating a task force to study and report on the state's workers' compensation system.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection: 2/01/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & CONSUMER PROTECTION

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: Workers compensation provides no-fault industrial insurance coverage for employers and employees in Washington. The workers compensation system is administered by the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I), and provides sure and certain relief for workers injured in their work. All employees in the state must be covered by either the state industrial insurance program (Washington State Fund) or be covered by a certified self-insured employer. Employers who provide industrial insurance coverage generally cannot be sued for damages when employees sustain work-related injuries. The Washington State Fund is financed by premiums collected from employers and employees.

The Workers' Compensation Advisory Committee (WCAC) was created by the Legislature in 1971 to conduct a continuing study of the workers' compensation system and advise L&I on matters pertaining to workers compensation. The WCAC meets quarterly and is composed of representatives of employers, employees, and the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals.

Summary of Bill: L&I is directed to convene a task force to evaluate and recommend methods to:

- improve the coordination and provision of quality, timely medical treatment;
- improve outcomes for, and shorten the duration of, long-term disability claims; and
- refine and resolve systemic liabilities and long-term pension trends.

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 task force consists of seven members appointed by the Director of L&I upon consultation with the WCAC and the Governor. Three members must be labor representatives, and three members must be business representatives. One labor and one business member must be members of the WCAC. The seventh member is a representative of L&I. The Director is encouraged to appoint individuals with practical experience or expertise in workers' compensation who are willing to maintain focus on the goals of the task force. Non-legislative members that do not represent an employer or organization are entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses.

The task force must periodically report to the Director of L&I, the WCAC, and the appropriate standing committees of the Legislature. A final report including recommendations must be submitted to the Legislature in December 2010.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 2010.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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