

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2346

As of February 23, 2012

Title: An act relating to removing the requirement that correctional officers of the department of corrections purchase uniforms from correctional industries.

Brief Description: Removing the requirement that correctional officers of the department of corrections purchase uniforms from correctional industries.

Sponsors: Representatives Walsh, Reykdal, Pearson, Hurst, Kristiansen, Nealey, McCune, Appleton, Orwall, Moscoso, Goodman, DeBolt, Rivers, Shea, Armstrong, Maxwell, Johnson, Springer, Darneille, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Eddy, Angel, Upthegrove, Kelley, Ryu, Stanford, Hudgins, Seaquist and Ormsby.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/11/12, 92-3.

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/23/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: The Department of Corrections (DOC) provides inmate work programs through Correctional Industries (CI). CI develops and implements programs that offer inmates employment, work experience, and training, and that reduces the cost of housing inmates. To achieve these goals, CI operates five classes of correctional industry work programs. All inmates working in class I–IV employment receive financial compensation for their work. Class V jobs are court ordered community work that is performed for the benefit of the community without financial compensation.

Class II, tax reduction, industries are state-owned and operated industries designed to reduce the costs for goods and services for public agencies and nonprofit organizations. Industries in this class must be closely patterned after private sector industries but with the objective of reducing public support costs rather than making a profit. State agencies are required by law to purchase goods and services produced by class II work programs where available and cannot purchase those goods from an outside source. Inmates working in tax reduction industries do so by their own choice and are paid a gratuity which may not exceed the wage paid for work of a similar nature in the locality in which the industry is located. Class II gratuities range from \$0.55 to \$1.55 per hour and includes such jobs as producing aluminum signs, license plates and tabs, mattresses, asbestos abatement, meat processing, optical lab,

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engraving, furniture manufacturing, screen printing and embroidery, industrial sewing, and laundry.

As part of its industrial sewing program, CI produces inmate clothing and bedding as well as uniforms for correctional officers, food service workers and maintenance workers. CI also contracts outside of DOC to provide uniforms for Washington State Ferries, safety vests for the Department of Transportation, coats for the Washington State Patrol, and other articles for Washington State Parks and Recreation.

Per DOC policy, all uniformed staff must wear the issued uniform while carrying out their duties and the uniform must be worn in its entirety, without non-uniform elements. Beginning in 2008, CI began making changes to DOC uniform production to increase efficiencies and improve quality assurance. Major changes include:

- converting from a transaction based system to a uniform management program, to include laundry, alteration and repair services as well as replacement of retired garments utilizing a just in time production and delivery method;
- instituting quality control measures such as stronger stitching and quality inspections;
- instituting replacement of shirts to a lighter color of blue to prevent issues with uneven fading between shirts and pants; conversion began in August 2011, with three institutions remaining to be converted;
- changing the style of pants from slacks to BDUs as recommended by the uniform focus group; new pants are expected to be in production June or July of this year; and
- future production of higher quality raingear currently purchased from an outside vendor.

Summary of Bill: Effective July 1, 2012, DOC is not required to purchase its uniforms from a class II inmate work program. Under no circumstances will offenders under the custody of DOC make or assemble uniforms to be worn by DOC personnel.

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: PRO: This is a simple bill. In no way is this bill anti-correctional industries. We care deeply about our correctional officers and they have complained at length that the uniforms they are required to wear make them feel less than professional. The main principal here is that correctional officers should not be required to wear uniforms manufactured by inmates, but quality is also an issue. For Correctional Officers, presence and professionalism play a big part in their authority. If an officer does not feel good about what he or she is wearing, it is tough to feel confident in a situation. Quality control issues have been a problem over a number of years which is further exacerbated by inmates who will do anything to undermine a correctional officer, including sabotaging the officer's uniform to the extent that they can. It is of particular concern for female uniforms when buttons are spaced too far apart or the pants are stitched so that they

fit tighter. Safety and security is at risk by letting inmates produce officer uniforms. The quality of the uniforms is so poor that we were asked not to wear the uniforms while performing tactical training as too many uniforms were destroyed in the process. Other Washington businesses would like the opportunity to compete for this business.

CON: Correctional officer uniforms are produced at Coyote Ridge in Connell, WA. A complete quality control system was instituted in July of 2010. Quality control workers review the garment at various checkpoints in the production line, which are manned by union employees or inmates who have been with the program a significant period of time. A complete quality inspection is also done when the garment is complete. This program has been recognized by the Governor as an example of lean government.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Walsh, prime sponsor; Representative Pearson; Tracey Thompson, Greg McCombs, Ryan Andelian, Chuck Maynard, Glenn Gaither, Sarena Davis, Eric Smith, Teamsters 117; Sidney Clark, Shawn Piloones, Robert Stricker, John Christy, Correctional Officers, DOC; Teresa Mosqueda, WA State Labor Council; Mitch Blumenthal, Blumenthal Uniforms.

CON: Lyle Morse, Correctional Industries, DOC.