

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJR 8202

As of February 10, 2011

Brief Description: Authorizing the reduction of public officials' salaries.

Sponsors: Senators Zarelli, Benton, Murray and Kilmer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/27/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Steve Jones (786-7440)

Background: Under the state Constitution, the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials prescribes the salary of state elected officials of the executive branch; members of the Legislature; and judges of the state Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Superior Courts, and District Courts. The salaries of county and municipal elective and appointive officials are prescribed by either the respective legislative authority or a local salary commission authorized by a local ordinance or resolution.

The state Constitution allows salary increases for these elected and appointed officials during their terms of office, but salary decreases during their terms of office are prohibited.

Summary of Bill: The compensation of elected and appointed state, county, and municipal officials may be decreased during their terms of office as necessary to reflect compensation reductions implemented for other public employees in the jurisdiction in which the officials serve.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The resolution takes effect upon ratification by the voters at the next general election.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Elected officials should share the sacrifices that other public employees are experiencing during this period of economic hardship. The salaries of elected officials should be kept out of the political arena; the decision should be left to the discretion of the State Salary Commission.

OTHER: Judges want to serve the people of the state in a fair and impartial manner, without undue pressure or threats of retribution. This proposal politicizes the salary-setting process. The courts have already experienced significant budget reductions while experiencing greatly increased caseloads.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Joseph Zarelli, prime sponsor; Teri Wright, Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials.

OTHER: Judge Richard McDermott, Superior Court Judges Association.