

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6038

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As of February 3, 2014

**Title:** An act relating to preserving the use of hydrocodone products by licensed optometrists in Washington state.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the use of hydrocodone products by licensed optometrists in Washington state.

**Sponsors:** Senators Becker, Rivers, Cleveland, Mullet, Bailey, Hobbs, Pedersen, Frockt, Angel, Ericksen, Tom, Conway and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health Care: 2/03/14.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

**Staff:** Bonnie Kim (786-7316)

**Background:** Hydrocodone is an opiate analgesic typically combined with other ingredients in products used to relieve moderate to severe pain. Some hydrocodone products are used to relieve cough. Federal law classifies combination products with less than 15 milligrams of hydrocodone per dosage unit, e.g., Vicodin, as Schedule III narcotics. Schedule III drugs, substances, or chemicals are drugs with moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence. Products with 15 or more milligrams of hydrocodone per dosage unit are classified as Schedule II narcotics, drugs with a high potential for abuse and physical and psychological dependence such as cocaine or Ritalin.

Optometrists examine the human eye for defects in vision and, after completing required didactic and clinical instruction, may use certain topical and oral drugs for diagnostic and treatment purposes. No optometrist may prescribe, dispense, purchase, possess, or administer drugs classified as Schedule III through V controlled substances, except as permitted by the Optometry Board of Washington for the treatment of diseases and conditions related to the human eye.

An optometrist may prescribe, dispense, or administer authorized controlled substances for up to seven days to treat a particular patient for a single trauma, episode, or condition, or for associated pain. Optometrists may not use, prescribe, dispense, purchase, possess, or administer any Schedule I or II controlled substance.

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*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.*

**Summary of Bill:** Optometrists may use, prescribe, dispense, purchase, possess, or administer hydrocodone combination products regardless of their classification as a Schedule I or II controlled substance.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**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 allows optometrists to continue their current practice and reduces costs by avoiding unnecessary referrals to other providers. Pain management is critical to patient care. Optometrists typically prescribe pain medication for less than the seven days allowed by statute.

CON: An optometrist is required to consult with an ophthalmologist before prescribing pain medication for post-surgical pain. There are reasonable alternatives that would remain in Schedule III even if hydrocodone combination products are reclassified as Schedule II.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Becker, prime sponsor; Brad Tower, Optometric Physicians of WA; Dr. Kim Eckroth, Yelm Vision Clinic.

CON: Dr. Aaron Weingeist, WA Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons.