
Labor Committee

HB 1284

Brief Description: Concerning hours of service for certain railroad employees.

Sponsors: Representatives Haler, Sells, Zeiger, Takko, Harris, Tarleton, Rodne, Stanford, Muri, Santos, Stokesbary, Walkinshaw, Hayes, Riccelli, Vick, Fitzgibbon, McCaslin, Ryu, Kochmar, Sawyer, Blake, Dunshee, Holy, Moeller, Jinkins, Reykdal, S. Hunt, Farrell, Clibborn, Moscoso and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires railroad carriers to observe rules limiting the hours of service for railroad yardmasters and individuals performing yardmaster duties.
- Prohibits railroad carriers from communicating with a yardmaster or individual who performs yardmaster duties in a way that disrupts the individual's rest during an off-duty period.

Hearing Date: 2/5/15

Staff: Daniel Rusk (786-7290) and Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

The federal Hours of Service Act (Act) prescribes the maximum hours and minimum rest periods for train employees, signal employees, and dispatching service employees employed by railroad carriers. A train employee is an individual engaged in or connected with the movement of a train. A signal employee is an individual who is engaged in installing, repairing, or maintaining signal systems. A dispatching service employee is an operator, train dispatcher, or other train employee who dispatches orders affecting train movement. The Act prescribes certain emergency situations where the Act does not apply. The Secretary of Transportation may exempt railroad carriers with 15 or fewer employees.

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.

In general, yardmasters are railroad employees that perform duties such as routing and directing trains, supervising switching crews, and monitoring switching orders and schedules. Yardmasters are not covered by the Act.

Federal law requires that laws, regulations, and orders that relate to railroad safety and security shall be uniform to the extent possible. Therefore, federal law may preempt a state law relating to railroad safety. However, a state may adopt a law related to railroad safety until the United States Secretary of Transportation issues a rule or order covering the same subject matter of the state law. A state may adopt or continue to enforce an additional or more stringent law if the law:

- is necessary to eliminate or reduce a local safety hazard;
- is not incompatible with a law, regulation, or order of the United States Government; and
- does not unreasonably burden interstate commerce.

Under federal law, there are three classes of railroad carriers: Class I, II, and III. The Classes are determined by railroad carrier's annual operating revenue. Class I railroad carriers have an annual operating revenue of over \$250 million. Class II railroad carriers have an annual operating revenue of less than \$250 million but more than \$20 million. Class III railroad carriers have an annual operating revenue of \$20 million or less.

Summary of Bill:

Railroad carriers must observe the following regulations regarding yardmasters or individuals performing yardmaster duties (Employee):

- An Employee may not be on duty for the railroad carrier in excess of 276 hours per month.
- An Employee may not remain on duty for an excess of 12 hours.
- An Employee may not remain on, or go on duty unless that Employee has gotten 10 hours of off duty in the previous 24 hours.
- An Employee may not go on duty after he or she has worked for 6 consecutive days unless the Employee has had at least 48 consecutive off duty hours. If an Employee works 7 consecutive days, then the Employee must have 72 consecutive off duty hours;
- An Employee may not go on duty when prohibited by the Act.
- The Employee must remain unavailable for any railroad carrier for at least 10 hours following an on duty period.

An Employee is on duty when he or she is performing the duties of a yardmaster, signal employee, dispatching service employee, or train employee. While an Employee is on his or her minimum required off duty period, a railroad carrier may not communicate with the Employee in any manner that could reasonably be expected to disrupt the Employee's rest.

A railroad carrier is exempt from these requirements in emergency situations involving a casualty, an unavoidable accident, an act of God, or a delay caused by something unknown and unforeseeable to the railroad carrier.

If the Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) determines that a railroad carrier has violated any of these requirements, the Commission may impose the following penalties:

- A civil penalty between \$10,000 and \$50,000 for a Class I carrier. However, if the Commission finds that the Class I carrier was grossly negligent or a pattern of violations

caused an imminent hazard of death or injury, the Commission may impose a penalty of up to \$1 million.

- A civil penalty between \$500 and \$25,000 for a Class II or Class III carrier. However, if the Commission finds that the Class II or Class II carrier was grossly negligent or a pattern of violations caused an imminent hazard of death or injury, the Commission may impose a penalty of up to \$100,000.

The Commission may adopt rules to administer these requirements. Additionally, after a hearing, the Commission may also exempt Class II and Class III railroad carriers from these requirements, provided that the exempted carriers are not allowed to work their Employees more than 16 hours in a 24 hour period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.