

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5337

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As of January 27, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to per diem rates for port district officers and employees.

**Brief Description:** Modifying per diem rates for port district officers and employees.

**Sponsors:** Senators Fraser and Pearson.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & State Security: 1/26/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & STATE SECURITY

**Staff:** Karen Epps (786-7424)

**Background:** In 1911 the Legislature authorized the Port District Act allowing citizens to create port districts. Port districts are authorized for the purpose of acquisition, construction, maintenance, operation, development, and regulation of harbor improvements, rail or motor vehicle transfer and terminal facilities, water and air transfer and terminal facilities, or any combination of these facilities. Among the general powers granted to ports are the following:

- to acquire land, property, leases, and easements;
- to condemn property and exercise the power of eminent domain;
- to develop lands for industrial and commercial purposes;
- to impose taxes, rates, and charges;
- to sell or otherwise convey rights to property; and
- to construct and maintain specified types of park and recreation facilities.

A port district is governed by a three-member board of commissioners elected to staggered six or four-year terms of office, with one commissioner being elected in each odd-year general election. Voters of a port district with a population of 500,000 or more may authorize the size of the board of commissioners to be increased to five members.

The port commissioners have the authority to hire employees and set wages, salaries, and benefits. Employees, officers, and commissioners of port districts may be reimbursed for travel and other business expenses incurred on behalf of the port district. A port district must adopt a resolution to establish regulations governing reimbursement for travel and other business expenses incurred by port officials and employees on behalf of the district. These

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regulations may establish that port officials and employees are paid per diem in lieu of actual expenses, but per diem cannot exceed \$25 per day.

**Summary of Bill:** Per diem rates for port district officials and employees must not exceed the U.S. General Service Administration per diem rates.

**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: The purpose of this bill is to reduce the amount of paperwork that employees and officers of the port have to do when they go somewhere on port business. It makes sense to set per diem at a level that avoids the detailed accounting. Current law allows port employees and officials only \$25 per day for expenses when traveling for port business. This number includes expenses for meals and lodging, in lieu of actual expenses, and hasn't been updated since 1965. Ports would like travel expense rates to be tied to the U.S. General Services Administration rates, which are comparable to the lodging and meal rates offered to state and other local government employees.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Fraser, prime sponsor.

**Signed In, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony:** PRO: Brandi Vena, WA Public Ports Assn.