

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5725

As of February 13, 2015

Title: An act relating to surplus lines.

Brief Description: Addressing surplus lines of insurance.

Sponsors: Senator Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Financial Institutions & Insurance: 2/12/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS & INSURANCE

Staff: Susan Jones (786-7404)

Background: Surplus Lines Insurance. Generally, insurance companies may not engage in the insurance business in Washington unless authorized to do so by the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). Surplus lines insurance coverage is an exception. Surplus lines insurance is coverage that cannot be procured from authorized insurance companies; often covering risks that do not fit normal underwriting patterns or fit standard insurance policies. Unlike insurance offered by an authorized insurer, surplus lines insurance is not subject to rate and policy form oversight. There are licensing and bonding requirements for surplus lines brokers. Because a surplus lines insurer is not an authorized insurance company, the Washington Insurance Guaranty Association, which pays claims as a result of the insolvency of an authorized insurer, does not cover claims of insureds of a surplus lines insurer.

Surplus Lines Procurement. If coverage cannot be procured from an authorized insurer, the surplus lines coverage may be purchased from an unauthorized insurer through a licensed surplus lines broker under certain circumstances and if a diligent effort had been made to find the coverage from a majority of authorized insurers. The purpose for using an unauthorized insurer may not be to secure a lower premium rate than would be accepted by any authorized insurer or to secure any other competitive advantage. The surplus lines broker must execute a certificate regarding the diligent efforts and file the certificate with OIC within 60 days after the insurance is procured.

Surplus Lines Premium Tax. A surplus lines broker must pay a tax of 2 percent on the premiums for surplus lines insurance transacted by the broker. The tax is credited to the

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general fund. For property and casualty insurance other than industrial insurance, if this state is the insured's home state, the tax payable must be computed on the entire premium, without regard to whether the policy covers risks or exposures that are located in this state. For all other lines of insurance, if a surplus line policy covers risks or exposures only partially in this state, the tax payable must be computed on the proportion of the premium that is properly allocable to the risks or exposures located in this state.

Home State. An insured's home state is as follows:

- the state where an insured maintains its principal place of business;
- the principal residence for an individual; or
- the state to which the greatest percentage of the insured's taxable premium is allocated for that insurance contract if all of the insured risk is located outside of Washington.

Summary of Bill: The tax on the premiums for surplus lines property and casualty insurance must be computed upon the entire premium where the risks or exposures covered are located inside the United States or its territories. The tax must be computed upon the entire premium, regardless of whether the risks or exposures are located in Washington.

If the surplus lines insurance covers risks or exposures located outside of the United States and its territories, no tax is due or payable for the portion of the premium properly allocated to risks and exposures located outside the United States and its territories.

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 surplus lines policy now requires a stamp that the policy is not covered by the Washington Guaranty Fund law. The bill clarifies and modernizes that stamp. The second piece is related to the Dodd Frank Act. This clarifies that Washington State does not charge or collect tax on any foreign exposure that exists on the policy.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Tom Parker, Surplus Lines Assn.