

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6331

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As of February 2, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to Washington state patrol officer compensation and training costs.

**Brief Description:** Concerning Washington state patrol officer compensation and training costs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Benton and Angel.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/01/16.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Kellee Keegan (786-7429)

**Background:** Employees have the right to organize and to designate a representative for collective bargaining. Generally, a bargaining representative is any lawful organization that represents employees in their employment relations with employers as one of its primary purposes. The employer and the bargaining representative must meet at reasonable times to bargain in good faith in an effort to reach agreement with respect to wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment. Washington State Patrol (WSP) officers are represented by either the WSP Troopers and Sergeants Association or the WSP Lieutenants and Captains Association.

In 1965, law was enacted that established minimum monthly salaries for officers of WSP that range from \$300 to \$425, based on position.

The annual vehicle license fee that is due on most vehicles is deposited as follows:

- \$20.35 of an initial or renewal goes to the State Patrol Highway Account;
- \$2.02 of each initial or \$0.93 of each renewal goes to the Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account; and
- any remaining amounts to the Motor Vehicle Fund.

Recruitment for a position as a trooper in the Washington state patrol takes between 4 and 8 months, and once a candidate is selected they enter the agency as trooper cadets.

**Summary of Bill:** The monthly minimum salaries are eliminated and replaced with a provision that states that monthly salary and benefits paid to an officer of WSP must be

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competitive with comparable law enforcement agencies within the boundaries of the state of Washington. Adjustments are intended to maintain the existing salary levels within the fiftieth percentile of the top five largest Washington law enforcement agencies' compensation plans.

The vehicle license fee is changed to be deposited solely into the State Patrol Highway Account.

City and county law enforcement entities that hire newly-trained Washington state troopers must incur the cost of training that officer within 36 months of the officer's original appointment as a state patrol officer. The amount withheld from these entities must be deposited into the state patrol highway account to be used solely for the Washington state patrol academy.

**Appropriation:**

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** Yes.

**Effective Date:** January 1, 2017

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Washington State Patrol is having a hard time recruiting and retaining officers. Graduation classes are at an all-time low. The Joint Transportation Committee study has 40 percent of all troopers eligible to retire in the next five years. Not a day goes by where a trooper isn't recruited by an outside law enforcement agency. Tying salaries to a mechanism in statute that will keep the agency competitive would help. Without an increase in WSP officers, the increase in population around Seattle comprises the safety of people. Mortalities are up on the highways, commute times are up. The inability to recruit and retain is compromising the safety of our state highways.

OTHER: Cities are also struggling to hire law enforcement officers. Employees make choices that employers can't control. This bill may hurt recruiting for the state and locals. Circumstances in section 4 of this bill would be unfair to local law enforcement agencies. If an officer moves, or their spouse gets a job in the city/county, the city would have to pay.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: EJ Swainson, Washington State Patrol Lieutenants Association; Davor Gjurasic, WSP Troopers Association; Sargent Courtney Stewart, WSP Troopers Association; Jeff Merrill, President WSP Troopers Association.

OTHER: Candice Bock, Association of Washington Cities; Brittany Jarnot, Cities of Everett, Issaquah, Kent, Puyallup, Redmond, Renton.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.