

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5409

As Passed Senate, March 15, 1995

Title: An act relating to compensation for injured fish and wildlife enforcement officers.

Brief Description: Providing compensation for wildlife agents injured on duty.

Sponsors: Senators Owen and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources: 2/24/95, 2/28/95 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/6/95 [DP].

Passed Senate, 3/15/95, 45-2.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Drew, Chair; Spanel, Vice Chair; A. Anderson, Hargrove, Haugen, Morton, Oke, Owen, Snyder, Strannigan and Swecker.

Staff: Ross Antipa (786-7413)

Background: Fisheries patrol officers who are injured on duty, such that they cannot perform their official duties, receive one-half of their salaries when relieved from active duty.

Wildlife agents now have duties similar to fisheries patrol officers in the merged Fish and Wildlife Department but they do not have provisions for payment following on-duty injuries.

Summary of Bill: All Department of Fish and Wildlife agents who are injured while on duty will receive disability benefits from the department. The amount of disability compensation depends on whether the injury occurred during line duties or nonline duties. Any payments from the Department of Labor and Industries are subtracted from departmental disability benefits, so agents will not receive more than their salaries. Any money from another job that an injured agent takes during a period of recuperation or disability is also subtracted from departmental disability benefits.

When agents become eligible for the state retirement benefit system, they are no longer eligible for departmental disability benefits.

Persons who were fisheries patrol officers before March 1, 1994 are not covered by these provisions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 14, 1995.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Fisheries patrol officers and wildlife agents should be treated in the same manner in cases of on-the-job disability.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Bev Hermanson, WA Federation of State Employees; Ron Peregren, Rich Mann, Ed Volz, Dayna Matthews, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Bauer, Drew, Fraser, Gaspard, Johnson, Moyer, Roach, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Sutherland, Winsley and Wojahn.

Staff: Tracy Cox (786-7437)

Testimony For: It is unfair that Fisheries patrol officers get better benefits than Wildlife agents. Both Fisheries patrol officers and Wildlife agents perform dangerous work and deserve good benefits. The Legislature should correct the inequity.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Bev Hermanson, WA Federation of State Employees; Ron Peregren, Richard Mann, Cyreis Schmitt, Department of Fish and Wildlife.