

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5808

As Passed House:
February 29, 2024

Title: An act relating to granting interest arbitration to certain public safety telecommunicators.

Brief Description: Granting interest arbitration to certain public safety telecommunicators.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Van De Wege, Lovick, Conway, Trudeau, Nguyen, Kuderer, Randall, Dhingra, Hunt, Valdez, Keiser, Stanford, Lias, Hasegawa, Shewmake, Mullet, Nobles and Salomon).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Labor & Workplace Standards: 2/14/24, 2/16/24 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/29/24, 92-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides interest arbitration for public safety telecommunicators employed by certain public employers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Berry, Chair; Fosse, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Doglio, Ormsby, Ortiz-Self, Rude and Ybarra.

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

[Interest Arbitration Under the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act.](#)

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA) provides for collective bargaining of wages, hours, and working conditions with employees of cities, counties, and other political subdivisions, as well as to certain employees of institutions of higher education.

For certain uniformed personnel under the PECBA, there is a public policy against strikes as a means of settling labor disputes. To resolve impasses over contract negotiations with these personnel, the PECBA requires binding interest arbitration if negotiations for a contract reach impasse and cannot be resolved through mediation. Under interest arbitration, an impartial third-party arbitrator makes decisions regarding the unresolved terms of the contract. There are statutory procedures for parties to select arbitrators and factors the arbitration panel must consider when making its decision.

Public Safety Telecommunicators.

A public safety telecommunicator is a first responder working in a primary public safety answering point who has successfully completed training and certification standards. This includes an employee of the state, a local public agency, or an independent governmental agency whose primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch 911 calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services.

Summary of Bill:

The interest arbitration provisions under the PECBA are applied to public safety telecommunicators employed by public employers. The provisions do not apply to public safety telecommunicators employed by the Washington State Patrol or any other state agency.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Emergency dispatchers work long hours under stressful conditions. Granting interest arbitration would improve working conditions and allow parties to come to mutually beneficial and fair solutions that will help workers do their jobs better.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Negotiations with agencies and 911 dispatchers have not been contentious. The bill does not apply to state agencies, which creates an uneven playing field. The arbitrator

should have to consider the employer's ability to pay. Without that provision, arbitration decisions may not be financially sustainable.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Kristin Woodrow, Teamsters 117.

(Other) Candice Bock, Association of Washington Cities.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.