

JOINT LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFIT EQUITY

MEMBERS

Legislators:

Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles
Senator Linda Evans Parlette
Representative Steve Conway
Representative Cary Condotta

Labor Representatives:

Joe Crump
David Johnson
Jeff Johnson
Owen Linch

Business Representatives:

Bruce Beckett
Chris Cheney
Jan Gee
Brian Minnich

Employment Security Department Liaison:

Annette Copeland

Legislative Staff:

Chris Cordes, House Office of Program Research
Jill Reinmuth, House Office of Program Research
Jennifer Strus, Senate Committee Services
Beth Herzog, House Office of Program Research
Nancy Osmundson, Senate Committee Services

WORKPLAN

Target Dates

Draft recommendations: November 29, 2005

Draft report: December 14, 2005

Final report to the Legislature: January 1, 2006

Background

In 2005 the Legislature enacted EHB 2255 which establishes the Joint Legislative Task Force on Unemployment Insurance Benefit Equity to review the unemployment insurance system, including:

- Whether the benefit structure is equitable;
- Whether the structure fairly accounts for changes in workforce and industry work patterns, including seasonality, and claimant work patterns;
- Whether the tax structure equitably distributes taxes; and
- Whether the trust fund is adequate in the long term.

The Task Force membership includes the following:

- The chair and ranking minority member of the Senate Labor, Commerce & Research & Development Committee;
- The chair and ranking minority member of the House Commerce & Labor Committee;
- Four business representatives, appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- Four members representing labor, appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

In addition, the Employment Security Department must maintain a liaison representative, who will be a nonvoting member. The Department will also cooperate with and provide information to the Task Force.

The Task Force must report to the Legislature by January 1, 2006.

Task Force Objectives

In the legislation establishing the Task Force, the Legislature stated two major objectives:

- to manage the unemployment insurance system to take into account the goal of reducing costs to foster a competitive business climate; and
- to adjust unemployment benefits to make reasonable improvements in benefit equity.

Meeting Dates/Tentative Agendas

June 29, 2005 (Wednesday), 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., Olympia

Work Session:

- Task Force organization
 - Overview of unemployment insurance claim and tax process
 - Overview of Employment Security Department's model for UI system analysis
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July 26, 2005 (Tuesday), 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Olympia

Work Session:

- Continue review and approval of Employment Security Department's model for UI system analysis
 - Overview of UI systems in selected states
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September 21, 2005 (Wednesday), 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Olympia

Work Session: Issues to be determined

October 5, 2005 (Wednesday), 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Olympia

Public Hearing/Work Session: Issues to be determined

October 20, 2005 (Thursday), 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Olympia

Work Session: Issues to be determined.

November 17, 2005 (Thursday), 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Olympia

Work Session:

- Issues to be determined.
 - Review draft recommendations
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December 1, 2005 (Thursday), 6:00 to 9:30 p.m., Olympia

Public Hearing/Work Session:

- Review draft recommendations
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December 14, 2005 (Wednesday), 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Olympia

Work Session

- Review and/or approve draft report to the Legislature
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PROCEDURES

(Adopted October 5, 2005)

Organization and Conduct of the Task Force

1. For each meeting, one of the legislative members of the Task Force will act as the chair to convene Task Force meetings. The chair will alternate between House and Senate members.
2. The Task Force will be managed by an Executive Committee (EC) consisting of the legislative members of the Task Force, one business member of the Task Force, one labor member of the Task Force, and the Employment Security Department (ESD) Liaison. The EC's functions will include developing agendas based on requests of Task Force members and, if deemed necessary, scheduling meetings different from those on the draft workplan. The EC will make decisions on a consensus basis. EC members may be temporarily replaced in the case of absence from a meeting by another Task Force member or, in the case of legislator members, by another legislator, preferably a member of the House Commerce & Labor Committee or the Senate Labor, Commerce & Research & Development Committee respectively.
3. Any portion of a Task Force meeting may be devoted to public comment, as agreed to by the EC.
4. Agendas and other meeting materials will be distributed by e-mail (or fax as requested by a Task Force member). Public information produced by the Task Force will be maintained on a Task Force webpage on the House and Senate committee websites.

Task Force Subcommittees

5. The Task Force may agree to one or more subcommittees of its membership, the labor and business subcommittee members to be selected by their respective caucuses. Subcommittees would be responsible for discussing and making recommendations to the full Task Force on specific topics assigned by the Task Force.
6. Each of the labor and business caucuses may suggest non-members to participate in an advisory committee or committees, as agreed to by the Task Force. Advisory committees would be asked to discuss and make recommendations to the full Task Force on specific topics assigned by the Task Force.

Research Requests

7. Research requests for data runs from the Employment Security Department will be made in writing through the EC initially. The EC will determine when requests may be made separately by the business and labor caucuses of the Task Force. The EC will prioritize requests based on the need for the information to support scheduled Task Force agenda items. The ESD Liaison will develop procedures for processing requests and will bring unresolved research request issues to the EC for resolution. The Task Force will review and agree on specified data assumptions to be used as the basis for all research requests.

Decision Making Process

8. Decisions will be made by the agreement of a majority of the Task Force voting members. Minority reports may be offered. Any interim understandings reached during discussions will remain tentative until an agreement is reached on all issues under discussion, unless agreed otherwise. Task force members may be temporarily replaced in the case of absence from a meeting by another person or, in the case of legislator members, by another legislator, preferably a member of the House Commerce & Labor Committee or the Senate Labor, Commerce & Research & Development Committee respectively. Such alternates are authorized to vote for the absent member.

Revised October 5, 2005