

RCW 41.56.157 Application of chapter to language access providers—Governor as public employer—Procedure—Intent—Report. (1)

In addition to the entities listed in *RCW 41.56.101, this chapter applies to the governor with respect to language access providers. Solely for the purposes of collective bargaining and as expressly limited under subsections (2) and (3) of this section, the governor is the public employer of language access providers who, solely for the purposes of collective bargaining, are public employees. The governor or the governor's designee shall represent the public employer for bargaining purposes.

(2) There shall be collective bargaining, as defined in RCW 41.56.030, between the governor and language access providers, except as follows:

(a) The only units appropriate for purposes of collective bargaining under *RCW 41.56.211 are:

(i) A statewide unit for language access providers who provide spoken language interpreter services for department of social and health services appointments, department of children, youth, and families appointments, or medicaid enrollee appointments;

(ii) A statewide unit for language access providers who provide spoken language interpreter services for injured workers or crime victims receiving benefits from the department of labor and industries; and

(iii) A statewide unit for language access providers who provide spoken language interpreter services for any state agency through the department of enterprise services, excluding language access providers included in (a)(i) and (ii) of this subsection;

(b) The exclusive bargaining representative of language access providers in the unit specified in (a) of this subsection shall be the representative chosen in an election conducted pursuant to *RCW 41.56.221.

Bargaining authorization cards furnished as the showing of interest in support of any representation petition or motion for intervention filed under this section are exempt from disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW;

(c) Notwithstanding the definition of "collective bargaining" in RCW 41.56.030(4), the scope of collective bargaining for language access providers under this section is limited solely to: (i) Economic compensation, such as the manner and rate of payments, including tiered payments; (ii) professional development and training; (iii) labor-management committees; (iv) grievance procedures; (v) health and welfare benefits; and (vii) [(vi)] other economic matters. Retirement benefits are not subject to collective bargaining. By such obligation neither party may be compelled to agree to a proposal or be required to make a concession unless otherwise provided in this chapter;

(d) In addition to the entities listed in the mediation and interest arbitration provisions of *RCW 41.56.501 through 41.56.540, the provisions apply to the governor or the governor's designee and the exclusive bargaining representative of language access providers, except that:

(i) In addition to the factors to be taken into consideration by an interest arbitration panel under *RCW 41.56.530, the panel shall consider the financial ability of the state to pay for the compensation and benefit provisions of a collective bargaining agreement;

(ii) The decision of the arbitration panel is not binding on the legislature and, if the legislature does not approve the request for funds necessary to implement the compensation and benefit provisions of the arbitrated collective bargaining agreement, the decision is not binding on the state;

(e) Language access providers do not have the right to strike;

(f) If a single employee organization is the exclusive bargaining representative for two or more units, upon petition by the employee organization, the units may be consolidated into a single larger unit if the commission considers the larger unit to be appropriate. If consolidation is appropriate, the commission shall certify the employee organization as the exclusive bargaining representative of the new unit;

(g) If a single employee organization is the exclusive bargaining representative for two or more bargaining units, the governor and the employee organization may agree to negotiate a single collective bargaining agreement for all of the bargaining units that the employee organization represents.

(3) Language access providers who are public employees solely for the purposes of collective bargaining under subsection (1) of this section are not, for that reason, employees of the state for any other purpose. This section applies only to the governance of the collective bargaining relationship between the employer and language access providers as provided in subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

(4) Each party with whom the department of social and health services, the department of children, youth, and families, the department of labor and industries, and the department of enterprise services contracts for language access services and each of their subcontractors shall provide to the respective department an accurate list of language access providers, as defined in RCW 41.56.030, including their names, addresses, and other contact information, annually by January 30th, except that initially the lists must be provided within thirty days of July 1, 2018. The department shall, upon request, provide a list of all language access providers, including their names, addresses, and other contact information, to a labor union seeking to represent language access providers.

(5) This section does not create or modify:

(a) The obligation of any state agency to comply with federal statute and regulations; and

(b) The legislature's right to make programmatic modifications to the delivery of state services under chapter 74.04 or 39.26 RCW or Title 51 RCW. The governor may not enter into, extend, or renew any agreement under this chapter that does not expressly reserve the legislative rights described in this subsection.

(6) Upon meeting the requirements of subsection (7) of this section, the governor must submit, as a part of the proposed biennial or supplemental operating budget submitted to the legislature under RCW 43.88.030, a request for funds necessary to implement the compensation and benefit provisions of a collective bargaining agreement entered into under this section or for legislation necessary to implement the agreement.

(7) A request for funds necessary to implement the compensation and benefit provisions of a collective bargaining agreement entered into under this section may not be submitted by the governor to the legislature unless the request has been:

(a) Submitted to the director of financial management by October 1st prior to the legislative session at which the requests are to be

considered, except that, for initial negotiations under this section, the request may not be submitted before July 1, 2011; and

(b) Certified by the director of financial management as financially feasible for the state or reflective of a binding decision of an arbitration panel reached under subsection (2) (d) of this section.

(8) The legislature must approve or reject the submission of the request for funds as a whole. If the legislature rejects or fails to act on the submission, any collective bargaining agreement must be reopened for the sole purpose of renegotiating the funds necessary to implement the agreement.

(9) If, after the compensation and benefit provisions of an agreement are approved by the legislature, a significant revenue shortfall occurs resulting in reduced appropriations, as declared by proclamation of the governor or by resolution of the legislature, both parties shall immediately enter into collective bargaining for a mutually agreed upon modification of the agreement.

(10) After the expiration date of any collective bargaining agreement entered into under this section, all of the terms and conditions specified in the agreement remain in effect until the effective date of a subsequent agreement, not to exceed one year from the expiration date stated in the agreement.

(11) In enacting this section, the legislature intends to provide state action immunity under federal and state antitrust laws for the joint activities of language access providers and their exclusive bargaining representative to the extent the activities are authorized by this chapter.

(12) By December 1, 2020, the department of social and health services, the department of children, youth, and families, the department of labor and industries, the health care authority, and the department of enterprise services must report to the legislature on the following:

(a) Each agency's current process for procuring spoken language interpreters and whether the changes in chapter 253, Laws of 2018 have been implemented;

(b) If chapter 253, Laws of 2018 has not been fully implemented by an agency, the barriers to implementation the agency has encountered and recommendations for removing the barriers to implementation;

(c) The impacts of the changes to the bargaining units for language access providers in chapter 253, Laws of 2018; and

(d) Recommendations on how to improve the procurement and accessibility of language access providers. [2020 c 289 s 2; 2018 c 253 s 8; (2018 c 253 s 7 expired July 1, 2018); 2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 809; 2010 c 296 s 2. Formerly RCW 41.56.510.]

***Reviser's note:** These RCW references have been corrected to reflect the reorganization of chapter 41.56 RCW by 2025 c 290 s 2.

Expiration date—2018 c 253 ss 5 and 7: See note following RCW 41.56.030.

Effective date—2018 c 253 ss 6 and 8: See note following RCW 41.56.030.

Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2018 c 253: See notes following RCW 74.04.025.

Effective date—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 ss 102, 104-115, 201-227, 301-337, 401-419, 501-513, 801-803, and 805-822: See note following RCW 43.216.025.

Conflict with federal requirements—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6: See RCW 43.216.908.

Conflict with federal requirements—2010 c 296: "If any part of this act is found to be in conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application to the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal funds by the state." [2010 c 296 s 9.]