

RCW 41.56.521 Uniformed personnel—Interest arbitration panel—Powers and duties—Hearings—Findings and determination. If an agreement has not been reached following a reasonable period of negotiations and mediation, and the executive director, upon the recommendation of the assigned mediator, finds that the parties remain at impasse, then an interest arbitration panel shall be created to resolve the dispute. The issues for determination by the arbitration panel shall be limited to the issues certified by the executive director. Within seven days following the issuance of the determination of the executive director, each party shall name one person to serve as its arbitrator on the arbitration panel. The two members so appointed shall meet within seven days following the appointment of the later appointed member to attempt to choose a third member to act as the neutral chair of the arbitration panel. Upon the failure of the arbitrators to select a neutral chair within seven days, the two appointed members shall use one of the two following options in the appointment of the third member, who shall act as chair of the panel: (1) By mutual consent, the two appointed members may jointly request the commission to, and the commission shall, appoint a third member within two days of such request. Costs of each party's appointee shall be borne by each party respectively; other costs of the arbitration proceedings shall be borne by the commission; or (2) either party may apply to the commission, the federal mediation and conciliation service, or the American Arbitration Association to provide a list of five qualified arbitrators from which the neutral chair shall be chosen. Each party shall pay the fees and expenses of its arbitrator, and the fees and expenses of the neutral chair shall be shared equally between the parties.

The arbitration panel so constituted shall promptly establish a date, time, and place for a hearing and shall provide reasonable notice thereof to the parties to the dispute. A hearing, which shall be informal, shall be held, and each party shall have the opportunity to present evidence and make argument. No member of the arbitration panel may present the case for a party to the proceedings. The rules of evidence prevailing in judicial proceedings may be considered, but are not binding, and any oral testimony or documentary evidence or other data deemed relevant by the chair of the arbitration panel may be received in evidence. A recording of the proceedings shall be taken. The arbitration panel has the power to administer oaths, require the attendance of witnesses, and require the production of such books, papers, contracts, agreements, and documents as may be deemed by the panel to be material to a just determination of the issues in dispute. If any person refuses to obey a subpoena issued by the arbitration panel, or refuses to be sworn or to make an affirmation to testify, or any witness, party, or attorney for a party is guilty of any contempt while in attendance at any hearing held hereunder, the arbitration panel may invoke the jurisdiction of the superior court in the county where the labor dispute exists, and the court has jurisdiction to issue an appropriate order. Any failure to obey the order may be punished by the court as a contempt thereof. The hearing conducted by the arbitration panel shall be concluded within twenty-five days following the selection or designation of the neutral chair of the arbitration panel, unless the parties agree to a longer period.

The neutral chair shall consult with the other members of the arbitration panel, and, within thirty days following the conclusion of

the hearing, the neutral chair shall make written findings of fact and a written determination of the issues in dispute, based on the evidence presented. A copy thereof shall be served on the commission, on each of the other members of the arbitration panel, and on each of the parties to the dispute. That determination shall be final and binding upon both parties, subject to review by the superior court upon the application of either party solely upon the question of whether the decision of the panel was arbitrary or capricious. [2012 c 117 s 87; 1983 c 287 s 2; 1979 ex.s. c 184 s 2; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 14 s 2; 1975 1st ex.s. c 296 s 29; 1973 c 131 s 4. Formerly RCW 41.56.450.]

Severability—1983 c 287: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1983 c 287 s 6.]

Construction—1973 c 131: See RCW 41.56.905.