

**SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FISCAL NOTE**

BILL NO. Senate Bill 889

PRINTER NO. 1519

AMOUNT

\$2,200
\$43,000

FUND

Fish and Boat Fund
Game Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

June 16, 2015

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Baker

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 889 amends the Enforcement Officer Disability Benefit Law, known as the Heart and Lung Act, to extend benefits to enforcement officers and investigators of both the Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission.

Under the law, Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission enforcement officers and investigators would be eligible for temporary benefits, including full salary, medical and hospital expenses, if they are injured or contract certain diseases while performing official duties until the disability has ceased. After four (4) consecutive years of employment, enforcement officers and investigators would be eligible for compensation for diseases of the heart and of the respiratory system. Any workmen's compensation received or collected by the employee eligible for Heart and Lung Act benefits is to be turned over by the employee to the employer. In addition, the law provides that no absence during an injury covered under the law shall reduce the usual sick leave benefits of enforcement officers or investigators.

The bill provides that any payments to be made on account of Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission enforcement officers and investigators shall be made from moneys appropriated to the commissions or executively authorized from the Game Fund, Fish Fund or Boat Fund.

The legislation is scheduled to take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

At present, Game Commission and Fish Commission enforcement officers and investigators injured while performing their duties are entitled to workmen's compensation, which pays two-thirds of the employee's average weekly wage. The legislation would require the agencies to pay the employee the difference between the amount paid by workmen's compensation and the employee's salary.

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Based on information provided by the Governor's Executive Offices, employees of the Fish and Boat Commission experienced 54 injuries over the last five (5) years and were paid \$21,721 in workmen's compensation benefits. Employees of the Game Commission incurred 204 injuries during the last five (5) years and were paid \$429,788 in workmen's compensation benefits. Based on this experience and the assumption that the workmen's compensation benefit is equal to two-thirds of an employee's salary, the enactment of this legislation is estimated to cost the Fish and Boat Funds combined approximately \$2,200 annually and the Game Fund approximately \$43,000 annually. It should be noted that these estimates include all staff employed by the commissions that were injured during the last five (5) years, not just enforcement officers and investigators and may be high. More detailed information was not available.

The commissions will likely incur additional administrative costs related to the Heart and Lung Act appeals that can be accomplished within the commissions' operating budgets.