

MINUTES

Disability Benefits Subcommittee Meeting
November 20, 1981
10 a.m.

PRESENT: Representatives Rodriguez and Sarna

Gladys Westberg, director of the Rehabilitation program of the Workers' Compensation program, addressed the Subcommittee on the workings of the rehabilitation program established in 1977. She stated that the program is to perform three functions:

- a) provide early intervention;
- b) assist in the rehabilitation process; and
- c) reduce costs and litigation.

The program mainly is to educate employees, employers, insurers, labor representatives, and others. It also licenses rehabilitation specialists and assists in the making of rehabilitation plans to help the person return to work. A recent law change requires the training of spouses following the death of a worker.

As a neutral party, personnel from the Rehabilitation program help insurers and injured parties settle problems

The program handles about 5000 cases per year, completing about 150 cases per month. The emphasis is on encouraging the employee to return to work for the same employer.

Screening of Spring, 1981, WCCO-TV Investigative Reporting Unit (I-Team) Report on Public Employee Disability Benefit Recipients

The videotapes were played for the Subcommittee and the audience.

Tom Dickinson, Minneapolis Fire, stated that although more than 2 hours of testimony was taken by the I-Team for the report, it was edited to under 2 minutes. He indicated that the I-Team had access to certain information that the relief association did not have.

In response to a question from Representative Sarna, Tom Dickinson replied that the relief association cannot convert persons on disability to a service pension. In response to a question from Representative Rodriguez, he stated that he was opposed to offsets for worker's compensation benefits because workers' compensation payments are compensation for an injury to the body and they should have nothing to do with money received as a pension.

Improvement of Disability Benefit Coverage for Relief Associations with Below Average Disability Benefit Coverage

Larry Martin went over the memo.

Chuck Anderson, West Saint Paul Police, spoke in support of the proposal to increase benefit levels for those relief associations with below average benefits.

Stan Peskar, League of Minnesota Cities, stated that municipalities with relief associations with below average benefit amounts should be involved in the decision concerning the amount of the disability benefits.

Tom Dickinson, Minneapolis Fire, stated that he thought that offsets are a form of penalization.

Stan Peskar, League of Minnesota Cities, stated that offsets should be used to prevent those who are disabled from making more while disabled than they would if they were actively employed in their old position. He stated that it may not be necessary to offset the entire amount of workers' compensation, but he thinks that any incentives to become disabled should be removed.

Representative Rodriguez commented that the topic of raising the minimum benefit is unrelated to the topic of offsets.