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## Governor says ferry unions to give up \$10 million in perks a year



By **SUSANNAH FRAME / KING 5 News**

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OLYMPIA, Wash. -- The governor announced Friday that state and ferry unions have struck tentative deals to cut out some of the lucrative perks ferry workers have had for decades.

Gov. Christine Gregoire says the agreements are historic in nature and, if ratified by union members, will save the state \$10 million a year.

The details of the agreements are supposed to be secret until union members can be briefed, but sources tell KING 5 News that some of the proposals include a three percent pay cut for most ferry workers. In addition, ferry workers would no longer earn double time for working past their shifts. Instead, they would make time and a half like all other state employees.

Also, the multi-million dollar expense of paying fill-in workers to drive to and from their routes would come to an end.

"These are the biggest sacrifices in the history of the ferry system in Washington state. Not only have they led the way for long term savings but also led the way in identifying savings as soon as the contracts are ratified," said Gov. Chris Gregoire.

The agreements come after a year-long KING 5 Investigation of the ferry system. The ongoing series, "Waste on the Water", exposed millions of wasted taxpayer dollars and a lack of accountability at the state agency.

The first story in the series aired one year ago. It exposed how some fill-in deck hands were able to work the system by choosing to work on routes far away from their homes. Their union contract with the Inland Boatman's Union (IBU) allowed the relief workers with the most seniority to choose where they wanted

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to work, without a cap on how far they could travel, or how much money they could collect by driving all that way to and from work.

KING 5 found one worker who made more in travel time and mileage pay in 2009 than he did in his base salary. He made \$60,000 in base wages that year, but by choosing routes far away from his home he collected nearly \$73,000 in travel time and mileage.

If ratified, the new contracts would eliminate that travel pay. In exchange, KING 5 has learned that the fill-in employees would receive a 17 percent pay increase. But losing the travel pay will still save the state a substantial amount of money every year.

"The tentative contracts are a statement that labor and management in Washington State Ferries can work together to solve problems," said David Moseley, Director of State Ferries.

Unions have been scrambling the last few weeks to get back to the negotiating table with the state to hammer out contracts. The motivation came after lawmakers in both the House and the Senate proposed aggressive ferry reform bills that would have taken away the ability for ferry workers to earn several forms of compensation including double time pay, penalty pay, and travel time and mileage. The bills are still alive and making their way through the legislative process. Sources close to the negotiations tell KING 5 the unions wanted to strike a deal to dissuade lawmakers to pass the bills.

Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee and sponsor of three of the bills, issued a statement after the news conference.

"At the end of the day, whether it's achieved

(reform) through this contract or through my bills, we need a system where the state bargains the same way with all our state employees. This is about parity and fairness across our workforce," said Haugen.

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