

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5590

As Reported By House Committee On:
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to providing service credit for periods of paid leave.

Brief Description: Providing service credit for periods of paid leave.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Moore, Newhouse, Talmadge, Spanel, West, Roach, Prentice, Prince, Vognild and Bauer).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Appropriations, April 3, 1993, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Carlson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Ballasiotes; Basich; Cooke; Dellwo; Dorn; Dunshee; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Lemmon; Linville; Peery; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Sommers; Stevens; Talcott; Wang; Wineberry; and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Silver, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7153).

Background: Public employee collective bargaining agreements typically contain provisions authorizing certain employees to take a leave of absence to engage in bargaining and other labor relations activities. While on leave, some may continue to receive a salary from their public employer. The employer, however, is reimbursed by the employee union.

Ordinarily, employees on a paid leave of absence receive retirement service credit for the leave period. However, questions have been raised about whether employees on leave for bargaining purposes are authorized to receive service credit since the employees' salary is indirectly paid by a union.

In 1992, the Legislature allowed members of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) who had taken leaves of absence to serve as elected officials of an education association, to receive service credit for leave taken prior to the 1992-93 school year. Members of TRS I were also granted the ability to earn up to four years of credit for future leaves of absence for this purpose, but only if the member paid the requisite employer and employee contributions.

Summary of Amended Bill: Public employees who take leave to serve as elected officials of labor organizations are considered to be on a paid leave of absence and are eligible to receive retirement service credit, as long as: (1) the leave is authorized by a collective bargaining agreement; (2) the agreement provides the employee with seniority rights during the leave; and (3) the employer is reimbursed by the labor organization for compensation paid to the employee during the leave.

The compensation reported for such a member to the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) cannot be greater than the salary paid to the highest paid job class covered by the collective bargaining agreement.

These provisions apply to members of Plan I and II of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), and the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF).

The compensation reported for this type of paid leave is allowed to be counted in a PERS or TRS member's average final compensation. Paid leave can already be counted in LEOFF.

The provisions apply retroactively for any members under the circumstances described, who had compensation reported to DRS. The provisions also apply retroactively to January 1, 1992, for any members who would have had compensation reported under the circumstances described, had it not been for a 1992 law addressing this topic.

A 1992 law addressing this topic, but only for members of TRS, is repealed.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: A technical amendment is made removing an unnecessary section from the bill.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The idea of allowing public employees on leave for purposes of labor relations to earn service credit in the retirement systems is already broadly supported. The bill treats all the retirement systems in a consistent fashion.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Dave Westberg, Operating Engineers (pro); and Karen Davis, Washington Education Association (pro).