

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5217

As Passed Senate, February 2, 1998

Title: An act relating to death benefits in the volunteer fire fighters' relief and pension system.

Brief Description: Providing death benefits for volunteer fire fighters.

Sponsors: Senators Bauer, Winsley, Franklin, Long, Fraser, Roach, Loveland, Rasmussen, Goings, Swecker, Kohl, Oke, Patterson and Haugen; by request of Joint Committee on Pension Policy.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/5/97, 2/6/97 [DP].

Passed Senate, 3/10/97, 48-0.

Passed Senate, 2/2/98, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Fraser, Hochstatter, Kohl, Long, McDonald, Roach, Rossi, Schow, Sheldon, Spanel, Swecker, Thibaudeau, Winsley and Zarelli.

Staff: Debrah Kime (786-7454)

Background: In 1996, legislation was passed which provides an additional \$150,000 duty-related death benefit to survivors of members of the Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters and the Washington State Patrol Retirement System. The Joint Committee on Pension Policy was directed to study ways to extend coverage to volunteer firefighters and reserve police officers.

Summary of Bill: An additional \$150,000 duty-related death benefit is provided to survivors of volunteer fire fighters and reserve police officers.

The primary funding source for the Volunteer Firefighters Relief and Pension Fund is 40 percent of the premium tax paid on fire insurance policies. This dedicated funding source, plus member and municipal contributions, is expected to exceed the required contributions for the plan over the next several years.

Benefits paid on behalf of a reserve police officer are reimbursed by the Legislature as a sundry claim.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 1997.

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

Testimony For: Testimony gave support for members receiving an additional death benefit. A request was made that coverage be extended to PERS and TRS members.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jay Matson, Washington State Fire Fighters Association (pro); Duane Malo, Washington State Fire Chiefs (pro); Bob Maier, WEA (pro).

House Amendment(s): The House amendment assumes that legislation (SHB 1939) would be enacted to give local governments the option of providing death and disability coverage through the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Act.

The death benefit provided to volunteer fire fighters and reserve police officers covered under the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Act is \$152,000 and the benefit is paid from the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Fund.