
Appropriations Committee

HB 2896

Brief Description: Allowing certain emergency medical technicians to transfer service credit.

Sponsors: Representatives Cooper, Delvin, Conway, Campbell, Kirby, Hurst, Jackley, Sullivan, Chase, Darneille, Santos, Ogden, Quall, Morell, Simpson, Schual-Berke, Fromhold, McDermott and Romero.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows emergency medical technicians who become certified firefighters and are employed by a fire department in a full-time, fully compensated position to: 1) opt to transfer to the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' retirement system Plan 2 (LEOFF 2) prospectively; 2) remain in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS); or 3) become members of LEOFF 2 and transfer previous service credit earned in PERS to LEOFF 2.

Hearing Date: 2/7/02

Staff: Andrea Hardy (786-7349).

Background:

Emergency Medical Technician Paramedics (EMTPs) employed by local governments in health departments or other similar divisions of local governments are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS).

Some EMTPs have had their jobs moved from various organizations in local government to fire departments. Upon meeting all the requirements to become firefighters, such as training and passing applicable examinations, these EMTPs employed at fire departments become members of the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System Plan 2 (LEOFF 2).

Members with service in both PERS 2 and LEOFF 2 may use the portability provisions of the state retirement law to combine years of service and average salary for purposes of retirement eligibility, but the retirement ages of each plan still apply to the benefit receivable from each plan.

At least one local government employer has moved EMTPs from a department such as a health department to a fire department, and those EMTPs have become firefighters and members of LEOFF 2 for service performed after the move. Several other local government employers are in various stages of considering a similar movement of EMTPs to fire departments.

Summary of Bill:

EMTPs who are currently in PERS but will become certified firefighters may choose to: 1) Transfer to LEOFF 2 prospectively only; 2) remain in PERS; or 3) become members of LEOFF 2 and transfer previous service credit earned as an EMTP in PERS to LEOFF 2.

An employee transferring eligible service credit from PERS 2 to LEOFF 2 must pay to the retirement systems the difference in contributions, plus interest, that would have been paid by the employee if the employee's entire service been rendered in LEOFF 2. The employee must complete this payment no later than five years from the date of their transfer application or retirement, whichever comes first. Any difference in employer contributions made to PERS 2 and the employer and state contributions that would have been made in LEOFF 2 become liabilities of LEOFF 2 and are incorporated into the LEOFF 2 contribution rate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2002.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.