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## Local Government Committee

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# HB 2952

**Brief Description:** Permitting leave sharing policies for local government employers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Alexander, Schindler, Romero, McCoy and Edwards.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits any county, municipality, or other political subdivision of the state to establish a leave sharing policy that allows public employees to voluntarily transfer leave to a fellow employee who is suffering from, or has a relative suffering from, a severe illness or an impairment that is likely to cause the employee to take leave without pay or to terminate his or her employment.

**Hearing Date:** 2/5/04

**Staff:** Thamas Osborn (786-7129).

### Background:

State employee leave sharing program. In 1989, the Legislature created a leave sharing program for state employees. The leave sharing program permits state agency, school district, and educational service district employees to donate some of their annual or sick leave to a fellow employee who faces losing his or her job, or going on leave without pay, due to an extraordinary illness, injury, or impairment that has caused that employee to deplete his or her sick and annual leave reserves. The illness or injury may be to an employee, a relative, or a member of the employee's household.

Leave sharing with employees in the uniformed services. In 2003, the Legislature expanded the state's leave sharing program to include state employees who must take leave as the result of their membership in one of the uniformed services. Under this expanded program, an employee must be permitted to receive donated annual or sick leave if the employee has been called to service. This service includes voluntary or involuntary service in the armed forces, the national guard, the commissioned public health services, the coast guard, or any other category of persons designated by the President of the United States in time of war or national emergency.

Leave sharing policies of local governments. State law does not currently regulate the leave sharing policies of counties, municipalities, or other local governmental entities. Accordingly, the implementation of such a policy is left to the discretion of a local government.

### Summary of Bill:

A county, municipality, or other local governmental entity may establish a leave sharing policy that allows an employee to voluntarily transfer leave to another employee in need of additional leave in order to cope with severe physical or mental health problems. If a local governmental entity chooses to adopt a shared leave policy, the policy must contain certain eligibility criteria, including:

- the employee, or a relative of the employee, must be suffering from an extraordinary or severe illness, injury, impairment, or other physical or mental condition;
- the demands placed upon the employee as the result of the illness, injury, impairment or condition must have caused, or be likely to cause, the employee to take leave without pay or terminate his or her employment; and
- additional eligibility criteria to be developed and implemented by the local governing authority.

Amends chapter 41.35 RCW (Washington School Employees' Retirement System) and chapter 41.40 RCW (Washington Public Employees' Retirement System), so as to include salaries or wages earned via a leave sharing program, as authorized under the bill, within the categories of compensation that are considered for the purpose of calculating retirement benefits.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 30, 2004.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.