

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5089

As Passed Senate, March 7, 2003

Title: An act relating to allowing fire fighter emergency medical technicians to transfer public employees' retirement system service credit to the law enforcement officers' and fire fighters' plan 2.

Brief Description: Allowing fire fighter emergency medical technicians to transfer public employees' retirement system service credit to the law enforcement officers' and fire fighters' plan 2.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Carlson, Fraser, Rasmussen and Esser; by request of Joint Committee on Pension Policy).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/28/03, 2/10/03 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/7/03, 47-2.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5089 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rossi, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Zarelli, Vice Chair; Brown, Doumit, Fairley, Fraser, Hale, Honeyford, Johnson, Parlette, Poulsen, Regala, Sheahan, B. Sheldon and Winsley.

Staff: Erik Sund (786-7454)

Background: Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) employed by local government departments other than fire departments are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) rather than the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF) because those employers do not meet eligibility requirements for LEOFF. EMTs whose positions are transferred into fire departments retain past service credit in PERS and are enrolled in LEOFF Plan 2 for the purpose of future service credit only. Their dual membership entitles them to the benefits of each plan according to its own rules.

Summary of Bill: EMTs who are dual members in PERS and LEOFF Plans 2 are allowed to transfer past PERS service credit into LEOFF 2. Under LEOFF 2, members may retire at 53 years of age without a reduction in benefits, or as early as age 50 with reduced benefits. EMTs choosing to transfer their service credit into LEOFF are responsible for reimbursing the system for the difference between their past contributions to PERS and the amount that they would have paid as members of LEOFF 2, plus interest. This payment must be completed within five years of a member's decision to make the transfer and before the member retires.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The bill will benefit most eligible employees, although a small minority may be unable to complete the transfer before retirement.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Kelly Fox, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters (pro).