

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5175

As Passed Senate, March 7, 2003

Title: An act relating to monthly pensions for volunteer fire fighters and reserve officers.

Brief Description: Increasing the monthly pensions for volunteer fire fighters and reserve officers.

Sponsors: Senators Doumit, Roach, Haugen, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe, Rasmussen, T. Sheldon and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/10/03, 2/17/03 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/7/03, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Erik Sund (786-7454)

Background: The Volunteer Fire Fighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pension System provides pension benefits for members of regularly organized volunteer fire departments and law enforcement agencies. Members who serve and make monthly retirement contributions for a period of at least 25 years are eligible to receive a pension benefit at age 65. There are a number of provisions allowing early retirement with a reduced benefit.

Summary of Bill: The value of the pension benefit is increased. The full benefit level for members retiring at age 65 with 30 years of service becomes \$300 per month, up from the current \$280 per month. Members retiring at age 65 with less than 25 years of service receive \$50 per month plus \$10 per month for each year of service, up from a current \$25 per month plus \$10 per month for each year of service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2003.

Testimony For: The bill, which has no general fund impact, would benefit plan members, who receive no other compensation for their dangerous work. The benefit increase provided would be especially helpful to retired members, as there are no automatic cost-of-living adjustments in this pension system.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Ryan Spiller, Washington Fire Commissioners Association (pro); Dave Ralston, Whatcom County Fire District #2 (pro).