

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1680

As Reported by House Committee On: Appropriations

Title: An act relating to transfers of service credit for emergency medical technicians under the law enforcement officers' and firefighters' retirement system plan 2.

Brief Description: Addressing transfers of service credit for emergency medical technicians under the law enforcement officers' and firefighters' retirement system plan 2.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunter, Haler, P. Sullivan, Priest, Hurst, Conway, Schual-Berke, Haigh and Simpson; by request of LEOFF Plan 2 Retirement Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/1/07, 2/5/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides an exception to the five-years of service waiting period for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) members of the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Plan 2 who elect to transfer service credit from the Public Employees' Retirement System Plans 1 or 2 for past service as an EMT.
- Permits EMT members or survivors of members to either complete the transfer payment of required contributions plus interest or actuarially reduce benefits to reflect the amount of unpaid transfer obligations if death or disability prevent the member from completing the five-year service requirement of the waiting period.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 32 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Buri, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunn, Ericks, Fromhold, Haigh, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, McDermott, McDonald, McIntire, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, P. Sullivan and Walsh.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are included in the membership of the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Plan 2 (LEOFF 2) if they work on a full-time, fully compensated basis for public employers, including cities, towns, counties, districts, municipal corporations, general authority law enforcement agencies, or four-year institutions of high education that had working fire departments before January 1, 1996.

Certain EMTs were moved from membership in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) to LEOFF 2 by two bills enacted by the Legislature in 2003 and 2005. Each bill provided a mechanism to enable EMT members of LEOFF 2 to earn future service credit in LEOFF 2, and for members to transfer past service earned as an EMT in PERS Plan 2.

The EMT members of LEOFF 2 are required to elect to transfer past service no later than June 30, 2013, and must earn at least five years of service in LEOFF 2 before the PERS Plan 1 or 2 service is actually transferred from LEOFF 2. An EMT LEOFF 2 member transferring PERS service is also required to pay the difference between the contributions paid into PERS, and those that would have been paid had the member earned the service originally in LEOFF 2, plus interest. The member payment must be completed within five years of electing to transfer the service.

The provisions permitting EMT members of LEOFF 2 to transfer past service from PERS expire July 1, 2013.

Summary of Bill:

If an EMT member of LEOFF 2 who has elected to transfer service credit dies or retires for disability prior to five years from the date of election, the member or surviving spouse may complete payment of the required contributions or receive an actuarial reduction to the continuing monthly benefit that reflects the amount of the unpaid obligation.

The expiration of the EMT service credit transfer laws are changed from July 1, 2013, to July 1, 2023.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are some unintended consequences from the five-year waiting period. There are approximately 80 members that are buying past PERS service credit into LEOFF 2 now and are currently in the five-year window period. Any of them could be helped by this bill if something happens to them before the period has expired.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Shawn Merchant, Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Plan 2 Retirement Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.