
Ways & Means Committee

SB 5161

Brief Description: Addressing the definition of employer for certain public corrections entities formed by counties or cities under RCW 39.34.030.

Sponsors: Senators Fain, Schoesler, Holmquist Newbry, Conway, Delvin, Carrell, Murray, Hobbs, Pridemore and Rockefeller; by request of Select Committee on Pension Policy.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds public corrections entities formed by counties, cities, or both to the list of Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) employers.
- Applies the employer definition change retroactively to any public corrections entity existing on or after January 1, 2011.

Hearing Date: 3/22/11

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

The Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) was created in 2004 and opened to members on July 1, 2006. The PSERS provides retirement benefits for state and local government employees who work in positions with law enforcement duties but are not eligible for membership in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System. Members of the PSERS with at least 20 years of service will be eligible for full retirement benefits from age 60, five years earlier than the regular retirement age in Public Employees' Retirement System Plans 2 and 3. Members of PSERS with 20 years of service may also early retire beginning at age 53 with a 3 percent reduction in benefits per year of early retirement.

Membership in the PSERS is restricted by an individual's employer and by specific job criteria. The PSERS employers are defined as the Department of Corrections, the Department of Natural Resources, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Gambling Commission, the State Patrol, the Liquor Control Board, county corrections departments, and the corrections departments of

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municipalities not classified as First Class cities, and employers employing statewide elective officials.

A new correctional facility is expected to open in the fall of 2011 as a shared jail for the cities of Auburn, Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way, Renton, SeaTac, and Tukwila. A multi-jurisdictional agency called the South Correctional Entity has been created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act to build and operate the facility. About 124 full-time corrections officers will be employed at the facility, including many that will transfer from pre-existing facilities operated by the participating cities. Corrections officers employed at the facility will not be eligible for PSERS because the statutory definition of employer in PSERS does not include corrections departments created by interlocal agreements between cities.

Summary of Bill:

The definition of employer for the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) is amended to include public corrections entities formed by counties, cities, or both. The employer definition change applies retroactively to any public corrections entity existing on or after January 1, 2011.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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