

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5920

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As of April 12, 2011

**Title:** An act relating to annual increase amounts in the public employees' retirement system plan 1 and the teachers' retirement system plan 1.

**Brief Description:** Limiting the annual increase amounts in the public employees' retirement system plan 1 and the teachers' retirement system plan 1.

**Sponsors:** Senators Murray and Zarelli; by request of Governor Gregoire.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 4/13/11.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Erik Sund (786-7454)

**Background:** The basic retirement allowance of a member of Plan 1 of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS Plan 1) or the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS Plan 1) is equal to 2 percent of the member's average final compensation, calculated on the members' highest consecutive two years of compensation, for each year of service. Retirement benefits are available to members after 30 years of service at any age, with 25 years of service at age 55, and with 5 years of service at age 60.

Retirees' benefits may be eligible for an annual increase from a benefit generally referred to as the Uniform cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), or Uniform COLA. The Uniform COLA was created in 1995, and is an automatic, annual, service-based COLA paid every July 1. The Uniform COLA is payable on the first calendar year in which the recipient turns age 66 and has been retired for one year.

The Uniform COLA is a fixed dollar amount multiplied by the member's total years of service. The dollar amount of the Uniform COLA is currently \$1.88 and increases by 3 percent every year on July 1. Statute specifies that members do not have a contractual right to future increases to the Uniform COLA. For a member with 30 years of service, the Uniform COLA would have most recently increased the member's benefit by \$56.40 per month.

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*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.*

There are two minimum benefits in place for members of PERS Plan 1 and TRS Plan 1. The basic minimum benefit is a fixed dollar amount per month multiplied by the member's total years of service. The basic minimum benefit is currently \$42.63 and increases on July 1 every year by the dollar amount of the Uniform COLA. A member with 25 years of service is therefore eligible for a minimum benefit of \$1065.75 per month and with 30 years of service, the minimum benefit is \$1,278.90 per month.

The alternative minimum benefit provides a benefit of \$1,000 per month and was established in 2004 for members of PERS 1 and TRS 1 who have either at least 25 years of service credit and have been retired for at least 20 years, or at least 20 years of service credit and have been retired for at least 20 years. The \$1,000 minimum monthly benefit, which is also subject to reductions if the member selects the enhanced COLA or survivor benefit options, increases by 3 percent each year and has done so since 2006.

**Summary of Bill:** PERS Plan 1 and TRS Plan 1 members benefits are no longer increased through the Uniform COLA above the amount in effect on July 1, 2010, unless a retiree qualifies for the basic minimum benefit. Members of PERS Plan 1 and TRS Plan 1 that qualify for the minimum benefit formulas in the plans will continue to receive the Uniform COLA.

The minimum contribution rates for the PERS Plan 1 unfunded liability is reduced from 5.25 to 3.5 percent, and for the TRS Plan 1 unfunded liability from 8.0 to 5.75 percent.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on June 30, 2011.