

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6026

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations & Security, February 4, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to volunteer emergency workers volunteering with a nonprofit ambulance service provider.

**Brief Description:** Concerning volunteer emergency workers volunteering with a nonprofit ambulance service provider.

**Sponsors:** Senator Dandel.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Security: 1/26/16, 2/04/16 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6026 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Dandel, McCoy and Takko.

**Staff:** Karen Epps (786-7424)

**Background:** The Volunteer Fire Fighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pension System (VFFRORPS) provides death, disability, medical, and retirement benefits to volunteer firefighters, reserve officers, and emergency medical workers in cities, towns, and fire protection districts. The VFFRORPS is funded by member and employer contributions and 40 percent of the fire insurance premium tax.

Employers are required to participate in the death, disability, and medical benefit plans - collectively referred to as the "relief benefits" - offered by the VFFRORPS, but participation in the pension component is optional and participants must enroll to be covered by the plan. Relief benefits are available to members covered under the relief provisions of the Volunteer Firefighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pension Act who are injured in the performance of duty.

Eligibility for retirement pension benefits from the VFFRORPS begins after 10 years of service as a member. The amount of the pension increases for each five years of service

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beyond the minimum 10 years and for payments made into the pension portion of the VFFRORPS. The maximum pension is vested with 25 years of service and 25 payments into the pension fund. Full retirement benefits are available at age 65, and early retirement benefits are available to members with 25 years of service on an actuarially reduced basis beginning at age 60. The maximum pension benefit is \$300 per month.

At any time prior to retirement or at the time of retirement, a member of the VFFRORPS may purchase retirement pension coverage for years of eligible service prior to the member's enrollment in the system, or for years of service credit lost due to the withdrawal of the member's pension contributions. A member choosing to purchase such retirement pension coverage must make a contribution to the system equal to the actuarial value of the resulting benefit increase. The municipality that the member serves may contribute some or all of the amount required to purchase coverage.

**Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute):** A nonprofit ambulance service provider may make provisions for the enrollment of volunteer emergency workers under the relief provisions and the retirement provisions of the Volunteer Fire Fighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pension System (VFFRORPS). If a nonprofit ambulance service provider enrolls volunteer emergency workers under the relief provisions, an annual fee must be paid by the nonprofit ambulance service provider to pay for covering the volunteer emergency worker under the relief provisions. If a nonprofit ambulance service provider elects to make the retirement provisions available to its volunteer emergency workers, the nonprofit ambulance service provider must pay a fee to enroll the volunteer emergency worker and an annual fee for each volunteer emergency worker. If a nonprofit ambulance service provider enrolls emergency workers under the relief provisions and the retirement provisions of the VFFRORPS, a Nonprofit Ambulance Service Provider Board of Trustees must be created to administer the VFFRORPS.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute):** Establishes that a nonprofit ambulance service provider may make provisions for the enrollment of volunteer emergency workers under the relief provisions and the retirement provisions of the VFFRORPS. Establishes that an annual fee must be paid by the nonprofit ambulance service provider to pay for covering the volunteer emergency worker under the relief provisions. Provides that a nonprofit ambulance service provider that has elected to make the retirement provisions available to its volunteer emergency workers must pay a fee to enroll the volunteer emergency worker and an annual fee for each volunteer emergency worker. Creates a Nonprofit Ambulance Service Provider Board of Trustees to administer the VFFRORPS in every county in which a nonprofit ambulance service provider operates.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill:** PRO: This bill was initiated last year by a nonprofit ambulance company that is a volunteer ambulance provider. There is an issue with these volunteers not being considered volunteers by the Department of Labor and Industries, and the nonprofit ambulance companies would like to be covered under VFFRORPS.

**Persons Testifying on Original Bill:** PRO: Senator Dansel, prime sponsor; Bob Berschauer, WA Ambulance Assn.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.