
Appropriations Committee

HB 2051

Brief Description: Concerning firefighters and law enforcement officers pension and disability boards.

Sponsors: Representatives Lovick, Chapman, Griffey and Dent.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows any active or retired firefighter or law enforcement officer who resides within the jurisdiction served by the board to be elected to a pre-LEOFF and LEOFF Plan 1 disability board, if no eligible active or retired firefighter or law enforcement officer is willing or able.

Hearing Date: 2/25/19

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

The Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF) Plan 1 provides retirement and disability benefits to law enforcement officers and firefighters who entered eligible employment between 1969 and 1977. Since 1977 eligible law enforcement officers and firefighters have entered LEOFF Plan 2. Before the implementation of LEOFF Plan 1 in 1970, law enforcement and firefighter pensions, referred to as Prior Act systems, were administered by local pension boards. When LEOFF Plan 1 was created, the law established LEOFF Plan 1 disability boards. Disability boards determine medical and disability benefits to be paid to LEOFF Plan 1 members. The LEOFF Plan 1 is unique among state retirement system plans in that retiree benefits include coverage for all necessary medical services.

Each city with a population of 20,000 or more has a LEOFF Plan 1 disability board. Each county also has a disability board, and these county boards have jurisdiction over LEOFF Plan 1 members who are not employed in a city with its own disability board. The LEOFF Plan 1 city disability boards have five members:

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- two members of the city legislative body;
- one member of the public appointed by the other members of the disability board;
- one active or retired firefighter member representing firefighters; and
- one active or retired law enforcement officer representing law enforcement officers.

Only active or retired Prior Act, LEOFF Plan 1, and LEOFF Plan 2 firefighters employed by or retired from the city, county, or fire protection district are eligible to be elected to a pension or disability board. Since 2013, if no firefighters under a LEOFF Plan 1 city disability board's jurisdiction are eligible to vote, the law enforcement officers eligible to vote must elect a second representative. If no law enforcement officers under a LEOFF Plan 1 city disability board's jurisdiction are eligible to vote, the firefighters eligible to vote must elect a second representative. Only those covered by the jurisdiction of the board are eligible to vote. According to the Department of Retirement Systems, there are approximately 3,022 members who may be eligible for a Prior Act pension benefit. The 2016 LEOFF Plan 1 Medical Benefits Actuarial Valuation Report indicates 62 active and 5,753 inactive LEOFF Plan 1 members.

Summary of Bill:

Any active or retired firefighter or law enforcement officer who resides within the jurisdiction served by a Law Enforcement and Fire Fighters' (LEOFF) Plan 1 or pre-LEOFF disability board may be elected to a pre-LEOFF and LEOFF Plan 1 disability board, if no eligible active or retired firefighter or law enforcement officer is willing or able.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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