
Appropriations Committee

HB 2655

Brief Description: Concerning the definition of period of war for pensions.

Sponsors: Representatives Griffey, Bergquist, Lovick, Sullivan and Leavitt; by request of LEOFF Plan 2 Retirement Board.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Moves the definition of “period of war” used for interruptive military service credit in the Law Enforcement Officers’ and Firefighters’ Retirement System Plan 2 (LEOFF Plan 2) into the LEOFF Plan 2 statute
- Modifies the armed conflicts that qualify as a period of war to include any in which the participant was awarded the respective campaign badge or medal.

Hearing Date: 1/23/20

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

The state provides certain recognition benefits to persons based on their status as a military service veteran. Veteran status generally is recognized for a service member who received an honorable discharge, or other excusable discharge. Benefits for such general service status include, among others: free license plate decals; admission to state soldiers' and veterans' homes; veterans' scoring preference on civil service exams; veteran homeownership down payment assistance programs; and certain services administered by the state Department of Veterans Affairs.

A separate status is recognized for veterans who served in a period of war or conflict. Such combat veterans are eligible to receive additional benefits, including, but not limited to: higher scoring preference on civil service exams; participation in a designated shared leave pool program; special designated license plates; and property tax relief for senior widows of veterans.

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.

The Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters' Retirement System Plan 2 (LEOFF Plan 2), sharing a definition of veteran and period of war with the other state retirement systems, provides credit for interruptive military service, for up to five years of service. The employee's contributions are waived if the interruptive service occurred during a period of a war or conflict that qualifies under the state definition for combat veteran status. For periods of interruptive military service that did not occur in a period of war, members of LEOFF Plan 2 can qualify for an additional five years of partially subsidized service credit. The member must pay the member contribution cost, but interest on member contributions is subsidized by the plan. Any amount of required contributions (for up to ten years total military service credit) must be paid within five years of reemployment.

The definition for a combat veteran includes a veteran who received an honorable discharge, or is actively serving honorably and has either: (1) served in a period of war; or (2) received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) for combat in a foreign territory. The Department of Defense has designated certain conflicts under which service qualifies for the AFEM. In addition to the AFEM, certain conflicts also qualify for specific medals of participation.

A period of war includes World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict, the Vietnam era, the Persian Gulf War, and any future period that includes a congressional declaration of war. A period of war also covers certain armed conflicts where the participant has been awarded a campaign badge or medal. Such conflicts include: the crisis in Lebanon; the invasion of Grenada; Operation Just Cause (Panama); Operation Restore Hope (Somalia); Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti); Operation Joint Endeavor (Bosnia); Operation Noble Eagle; Operation Enduring Freedom (southern or central Asia); Operation Iraqi Freedom (Persian Gulf); Operation Inherent Resolve (Iraq and Syria), and Operation Freedom's Sentinel (Afghanistan).

Summary of Bill:

The definition of "period of war" used for interruptive military service credit in the LEOFF Plan 2 is moved from the general provisions on public employment, civil service, and pension into the LEOFF Plan 2 statute. The list of armed conflicts that qualify as a period of war is modified to include any in which the participating LEOFF 2 member was awarded the respective campaign badge or medal.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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