
Labor & Workforce Development Committee

HB 1444

Brief Description: Addressing the benefits of a surviving spouse of a member of the law enforcement officers' and firefighters' retirement system or Washington state patrol retirement system.

Sponsors: Representatives Kirby, Hope, Upthegrove, Liias, Maxwell, Stanford, Reykdal, Orwall, Sullivan, Sells, Hurst, Fitzgibbon, Kelley and Ormsby; by request of Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters' Plan 2 Retirement Board.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that surviving spouses of members of the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System Plan 2 and the Washington State Patrol Retirement System receive monthly industrial insurance benefits regardless of remarriage.

Hearing Date: 1/28/11

Staff: Joan Elgee (786-7106).

Background:

Workers injured in the course of employment receive various industrial insurance benefits. If death results from the injury, the surviving spouse receives a monthly benefit ranging from 60 to 70 percent of the wages of the deceased worker. If a surviving spouse remarries, monthly benefits are discontinued at the end of the month in which remarriage occurs. A surviving spouse who remarries may choose to receive a lump sum of 24 times the monthly rate, with some adjustments, or 50 percent of the remaining annuity value of the pension, whichever is less. If the surviving spouse does not choose the lump sum option and the remarriage ends in death, annulment, or dissolution, monthly benefits may be reinstated.

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.

In 2010, legislation was enacted increasing the amount of the lump sum option to 36 times the monthly rate for surviving spouses of members of the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF) and the Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS). (Only members of LEOFF Plan 2, those hired on or after October 1, 1997, are eligible for industrial insurance.)

Summary of Bill:

Surviving spouses of members of the LEOFF and the WSPRS continue to receive monthly industrial insurance death benefits for death resulting from a workplace injury for life regardless of remarriage. The reference to a lump-sum option is retained. Monthly payments for a surviving spouse who remarried resume, regardless of whether the surviving spouse received a lump-sum benefit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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