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**SENATE BILL 5829**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Mullet, Schoesler, Hunt, Walsh, Warnick, Takko, and Van De Wege

AN ACT Relating to pension benefits and contributions in the volunteer firefighters' and reserve officers' relief and pension system; amending RCW 41.24.030 and 41.24.170; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 41.24.030 and 2005 c 37 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The volunteer firefighters' and reserve officers' relief and pension principal fund is created in the state treasury as a trust fund for the benefit of the participants covered by this chapter consisting of:

(a) All bequests, fees, gifts, emoluments, or donations given or paid to the fund.

(b) An annual fee for each member of its fire department to be paid by each municipal corporation for the purpose of affording relief provided in this chapter for firefighters as follows:

(i) ((~~Thirty~~)) Fifty dollars for each volunteer or part-paid member of its fire department;

(ii) A sum equal to one and one-half of one percent of the annual salary attached to the rank of each full-paid member of its fire department, prorated for 1970 on the basis of services prior to March 1, 1970.

(c) An annual fee for each emergency worker of an emergency medical service district paid by the district that is sufficient to pay the full costs of covering the emergency worker under the relief provisions of this chapter, including operating expenses. The state board shall determine the amount of this fee based on the latest actuarial valuation of the system.

(d) Where a municipal corporation has elected to make relief provisions of this chapter available to its reserve officers, an annual fee for each reserve officer paid by the municipal corporation that is sufficient to pay the full costs of covering the reserve officer under the relief provisions of this chapter, including operating expenses. The state board shall determine the amount of this fee based on the latest actuarial valuation of the system.

(e) Where a municipal corporation has elected to make the retirement pension provisions of this chapter available to members of its fire department, an annual fee of ((~~sixty~~)) ninety dollars for each of its firefighters electing to enroll, ((~~thirty~~)) forty-five dollars of which shall be paid by the municipality and ((~~thirty~~)) forty-five dollars of which shall be paid by the firefighter. However, nothing in this section prohibits any municipality from voluntarily paying the firefighters' fee for this retirement pension coverage.

(f) Where an emergency medical service district has elected to make the retirement pension provisions of this chapter available to its emergency workers, for each emergency worker electing to enroll: (i) An annual fee of thirty dollars shall be paid by the emergency worker; and (ii) an annual fee paid by the emergency medical service district that, together with the thirty dollar fee per emergency worker, is sufficient to pay the full costs of covering the emergency worker under the retirement pension benefits provided under this chapter, including operating expenses. The state board shall determine the amount of this fee based on the latest actuarial valuation of the system. However, nothing in this section prohibits any emergency medical service district from voluntarily paying the emergency workers' fees for this retirement pension coverage.

(g) Where a municipal corporation has elected to make the retirement pension provisions of this chapter available to its reserve officers, for each reserve officer electing to enroll: (i) An annual fee of thirty dollars shall be paid by the reserve officer; and (ii) an annual fee paid by the municipal corporation that, together with the thirty dollar fee per reserve officer, is sufficient to pay the full costs of covering the reserve officer under the retirement pension benefits provided under this chapter, including operating expenses. The state board shall determine the amount of this fee based on the latest actuarial valuation of the system. However, nothing in this section prohibits any municipal corporation from voluntarily paying the reserve officers' fees for this retirement pension coverage.

(h) Moneys transferred from the administrative fund, as provided under subsection (4) of this section, which may only be used to pay relief and retirement pensions for firefighters.

(i) Earnings from the investment of moneys in the principal fund.

(2) The state investment board, upon request of the state treasurer shall have full power to invest, reinvest, manage, contract, sell, or exchange investments acquired from that portion of the amounts credited to the principal fund as is not, in the judgment of the state board, required to meet current withdrawals. Investments shall be made in the manner prescribed by RCW 43.84.150 and not otherwise.

All bonds, investments, or other obligations purchased by the state investment board shall be placed in the custody of the state treasurer, and he or she shall collect the principal thereof and interest thereon when due.

The state investment board may sell any of the bonds, investments, or obligations so acquired and the proceeds thereof shall be paid to the state treasurer.

(3) The interest, earnings, and proceeds from the sale and redemption of any investments held by the principal fund and invested by the state investment board shall be credited to and form a part of the principal fund, less the allocation to the state investment board expense account pursuant to RCW 43.33A.160.

Subject to restrictions contained in this chapter, all amounts credited to the principal fund shall be available for making the benefit payments required by this chapter.

The state treasurer shall make an annual report showing the condition of the fund.

(4) The volunteer firefighters' and reserve officers' administrative fund is created in the state treasury. Moneys in the fund, including unanticipated revenues under RCW 43.79.270, may be spent only after appropriation, and may be used only for operating expenses of the volunteer firefighters' and reserve officers' relief and pension principal fund, the operating expenses of the volunteer firefighters' and reserve officers' administrative fund, or for transfer from the administrative fund to the principal fund.

(a) Forty percent of all moneys received by the state from taxes on fire insurance premiums shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the administrative fund.

(b) The state board shall compute a percentage of the amounts credited to the administrative fund to be paid into the principal fund.

(c) For the purpose of providing amounts to be used to defray the cost of administration of the principal and administrative funds, the state board shall ascertain at the beginning of each biennium and request from the legislature an appropriation from the administrative fund sufficient to cover estimated expenses for the biennium.

**Sec.**  RCW 41.24.170 and 2003 c 62 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as provided in RCW 41.24.410, whenever any participant has been a member and served honorably for a period of ten years or more as an active member in any capacity, of any regularly organized fire department or law enforcement agency of any municipality in this state, and which municipality has adopted appropriate legislation allowing its firefighters or reserve officers to enroll in the retirement pension provisions of this chapter, and the participant has enrolled under the retirement pension provisions and has reached the age of sixty-five years, the board of trustees shall order and direct that he or she be retired and be paid a monthly pension from the principal fund as provided in this section.

(2)(a) Until July 1, 2019, whenever a participant has been a member, and served honorably for a period of twenty-five years or more as an active member in any capacity, of any regularly organized volunteer fire department or law enforcement agency of any municipality in this state, and he or she has reached the age of sixty-five years, and the annual retirement fee has been paid for a period of twenty-five years, the board of trustees shall order and direct that he or she be retired and such participant be paid a monthly pension of three hundred fifty dollars from the fund for the balance of that participant's life.

(b) Beginning July 1, 2020, whenever a participant has been a member, and served honorably for a period of twenty-five years or more as an active member in any capacity, of any regularly organized volunteer fire department or law enforcement agency of any municipality in this state, and he or she has reached the age of sixty-five years, and the annual retirement fee has been paid for each year of active membership, but at least twenty-five years, the board of trustees shall order and direct that he or she be retired and such participant be paid a monthly pension of three hundred fifty dollars, plus an additional ten dollars per month for each year that the retirement fee was paid beyond twenty-five years, from the fund for the balance of that participant's life.

(3) Whenever any participant has been a member, and served honorably for a period of twenty-five years or more as an active member in any capacity, of any regularly organized volunteer fire department or law enforcement agency of any municipality in this state, and the participant has reached the age of sixty-five years, and the annual retirement fee has been paid for a period of less than twenty-five years, the board of trustees shall order and direct that he or she be retired and that such participant shall receive a minimum monthly pension of fifty dollars increased by the sum of ten dollars each month for each year the annual fee has been paid, but not to exceed ((~~the maximum monthly pension provided in this section~~)) three hundred fifty dollars, for the balance of the participant's life.

(4) No pension provided in this section may become payable before the sixty-fifth birthday of the participant, nor for any service less than twenty-five years: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That:

((~~(1)~~)) (a) Any participant, who is older than fifty-nine years of age, less than sixty-five years of age, and has completed twenty-five years or more of service may irrevocably elect a reduced monthly pension in lieu of the pension that participant would be entitled to under this section at age sixty-five. The participant who elects this option shall receive the reduced pension for the balance of his or her life. The reduced monthly pension is calculated as a percentage of the pension the participant would be entitled to at age sixty-five. The percentage used in the calculation is based upon the age of the participant at the time of retirement as follows:

Age 60     Sixty percent

Age 61     Sixty-eight percent

Age 62     Seventy-six percent

Age 63     Eighty-four percent

Age 64     Ninety-two percent

((~~(2)~~)) (b) If a participant is age sixty-five or older but has less than twenty-five years of service, the participant is entitled to a reduced benefit. The reduced benefit shall be computed as follows:

((~~(a)~~)) (i) Upon completion of ten years, but less than fifteen years of service, a monthly pension equal to twenty percent of such pension as the participant would have been entitled to receive at age sixty-five after twenty-five years of service;

((~~(b)~~)) (ii) Upon completion of fifteen years, but less than twenty years of service, a monthly pension equal to thirty-five percent of such pension as the participant would have been entitled to receive at age sixty-five after twenty-five years of service; and

((~~(c)~~)) (iii) Upon completion of twenty years, but less than twenty-five years of service, a monthly pension equal to seventy-five percent of such pension as the participant would have been entitled to receive at age sixty-five after twenty-five years of service.

((~~(3)~~)) (c) If a participant with less than twenty-five years of service elects to retire after turning age sixty but before turning age sixty-five, the participant's retirement allowance is subject:

((~~(a)~~)) (i) First to the reduction under (b) of this subsection ((~~(2) of this section~~)) based upon the participant's years of service; and

((~~(b)~~)) (ii) Second to the reduction under (a) of this subsection ((~~(1) of this section~~)) based upon the participant's age.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect July 1, 2019.

**--- END ---**