

RCW 43.43.040 Disability of patrol officers. (1) The chief of the Washington state patrol shall relieve from active duty Washington state patrol officers who, while in the performance of their official duties, or while on standby or available for duty, have been or hereafter may be injured or incapacitated to such an extent as to be mentally or physically incapable of active service: PROVIDED, That:

(a) Any officer disabled while performing line duty who is found by the chief to be physically incapacitated shall be placed on disability leave for a period not to exceed six months from the date of injury or the date incapacitated. During this period, the officer shall be entitled to all pay, benefits, insurance, leave, and retirement contributions awarded to an officer on active status, less any compensation received through the department of labor and industries. No such disability leave shall be approved until an officer has been unavailable for duty for more than forty consecutive work hours. Prior to the end of the six-month period, the chief shall either place the officer on disability status or return the officer to active status.

For the purposes of this section, "line duty" is active service which encompasses the traffic law enforcement duties and/or other law enforcement responsibilities of the state patrol. These activities encompass all enforcement practices of the laws, accident and criminal investigations, or actions requiring physical exertion or exposure to hazardous elements.

The chief shall define by rule the situations where a disability has occurred during line duty;

(b) Benefits under this section for a disability that is incurred while in other employment will be reduced by any amount the officer receives or is entitled to receive from workers' compensation, social security, group insurance, other pension plan, or any other similar source provided by another employer on account of the same disability;

(c) An officer injured while engaged in willfully tortious or criminal conduct shall not be entitled to disability benefits under this section; and

(d) Should a disability beneficiary whose disability was not incurred in line of duty, prior to attaining age fifty, engage in a gainful occupation, the chief shall reduce the amount of his or her retirement allowance to an amount which when added to the compensation earned by him or her in such occupation shall not exceed the basic salary currently being paid for the rank the retired officer held at the time he or she was disabled. All such disability beneficiaries under age fifty shall file with the chief every six months a signed and sworn statement of earnings and any person who shall knowingly swear falsely on such statement shall be subject to prosecution for perjury. Should the earning capacity of such beneficiary be further altered, the chief may further alter his or her disability retirement allowance as indicated above. The failure of any officer to file the required statement of earnings shall be cause for cancellation of retirement benefits.

(2) (a) Officers on disability status shall receive one-half of their compensation at the existing wage, during the time the disability continues in effect, less any compensation received through the department of labor and industries. They shall be subject to mental or physical examination at any state institution or otherwise under the direction of the chief of the patrol at any time during such relief from duty to ascertain whether or not they are able to resume active duty.

(b) In addition to the compensation provided in (a) of this subsection, the compensation of an officer who is totally disabled during line duty shall include reimbursement for any payments of premiums made after June 10, 2010, for employer-provided medical insurance. An officer is considered totally disabled if he or she is unable to perform any substantial gainful activity due to a physical or mental condition that may be expected to result in death or that has lasted or is expected to last at least twelve months. Substantial gainful activity is defined as average earnings in excess of eight hundred sixty dollars a month in 2006 adjusted annually as determined by the department of retirement systems based on federal social security disability standards. An officer in receipt of reimbursement for any payments of premium rates for employer-provided medical insurance under this subsection is required to file with the chief any financial records that are necessary to determine continued eligibility for such reimbursement. The failure of any officer to file the required financial records is cause for cancellation of the reimbursement. The legislature reserves the right to amend or repeal the benefits provided in this subsection (2)(b) in the future and no member or beneficiary has a contractual right to receive any distribution not granted prior to that time. [2010 c 259 s 3; 2009 c 549 s 5122; 1998 c 194 s 1; 1987 c 185 s 17; 1981 c 165 s 1; 1973 2nd ex.s. c 20 s 1; 1965 c 8 s 43.43.040. Prior: 1947 c 174 s 1; 1943 c 215 s 1; RRS s 6362-65.]

Short title—2010 c 259: See note following RCW 41.26.470.

Intent—Severability—1987 c 185: See notes following RCW 51.12.130.

Severability—1981 c 165: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1981 c 165 s 2.]

Effective date—1981 c 165: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety, the support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect January 1, 1981." [1981 c 165 s 3.]