

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1453

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, March 22, 1995

Title: An act relating to reserve officers' retirement.

Brief Description: Providing for reserve officers' retirement.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Foreman, Ogden, Chappell, Costa, Dickerson, Schoesler, Stevens and Radcliff).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 3/21/95, 3/22/95 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Hale, McCaslin and Winsley.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: Local governments have the option of joining the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Fund. The fund provides two kinds of benefits to volunteer fire fighters: 1) relief benefits providing medical and survivor needs, and 2) a pension system providing for retirement.

The base retirement benefit is calculated upon retirement for each member equalling \$25 per month plus \$8 for each year contributions were made, not to exceed \$225 per month. A percentage factor based on years of service is then applied to the base in order to arrive at the monthly benefit.

The fund is administered by the State Board of Volunteer Fire Fighters who sets annual contribution rates. Cost per member of the pension fund is \$109. Members contribute \$30 per year, the municipality contributes an additional \$30 per year, and the remaining cost is paid from the fire insurance premium tax.

Currently, no such provisions exist for reserve law enforcement officers. There are 2,349 (23 percent) reserve law enforcement officers working in 172 cities in 38 counties of the state of Washington compared to 7,876 (77 percent) regular officers.

Summary of Bill: Counties are included within the local governments whose reserve law enforcement officers are allowed to join only the pension benefits portion of the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Fund, if that option is provided to them by the municipality. The Board of Volunteer Fire Fighters sets fees for participation that result in no change in current contribution rates and no change in the current funding system.

The municipality is given a choice of three methods by which it disposes of the issue of credit for prior service. The municipality must make its one-time choice within one year of its election to cover its reserve law enforcement officers under the retirement plan.

The head of the local law enforcement agency is given the authority to enroll its reserve officers and certify their service. Retirement benefit is not granted unless the reserve officer completes at least three years of service after the effective date of this act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Reserve officers provide essential law enforcement services which enhance the safety of Washington's citizens. The bill provides an incentive for reserve officers to remain with the force and acknowledges their equality with volunteer fire fighters who already have a pension system. Training costs would be reduced.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Chuck Munson, Wenatchee Police Department (pro); Terry Lattin, Seattle Police Department (pro); Larry Slavens, Sunnyside Police Department (pro); M. Esther Zimmerman, Chelan County Sheriff's Office (pro).