

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1219

As Reported By House Committee On:
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to relief and retirement pensions under chapter 41.24 RCW.

Brief Description: Changing relief and retirement pension provisions under chapter 41.24 RCW.

Sponsors: Representatives Ogden, Carlson, Conway, Doumit, D. Schmidt, Lantz and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/9/99, 2/11/99 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides medical benefits under the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension system to reserve officers.
- Increases the monthly death benefit to surviving children and dependent parents.
- Decreases the number of trustees on emergency medical services boards from six to five.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Huff, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Alexander, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; D. Schmidt, Republican Vice Chair; Barlean; Benson; Boldt; Carlson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McMorris; Mulliken; Parlette; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Denise Graham (786-7137).

Background:

The Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension system was created to provide death, disability, medical, and retirement benefits to volunteer fire fighters in cities, towns and fire protection districts. This system is administered and controlled by the State Board for Volunteer Fire Fighters and by local boards of trustees.

Every municipality with volunteer fire fighters or emergency medical workers must participate in the death, disability and medical portions of this system. Every municipality with volunteer fire fighters or emergency medical workers may opt to participate in the retirement benefits portion of this system.

Under legislation enacted in 1995 and 1998, municipalities have the option of providing the death, disability and retirement benefits of the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension system to their reserve law enforcement officers. The medical provisions of the system are not available to reserve officers.

Funding for the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension system comes from a variety of sources, including 40 percent of the revenue from the state's fire insurance premiums tax and annual fees paid by participating municipalities and participating volunteer fire fighters, emergency medical workers, and reserve officers.

The death benefit provisions of the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension system include \$152,000 paid to the surviving spouse or, where there is no surviving spouse, to any surviving dependent children or parents. In addition, the surviving spouse receives \$1,275 per month plus \$110 for each dependent child, to a maximum monthly benefit of \$2,550.

Where there is no surviving spouse, \$825 per month is paid for the youngest or only child plus \$70 per month for each additional child, to a maximum monthly benefit of \$1,650. If there is no surviving spouse and no surviving children, a dependent parent receives a benefit of \$825 per month.

Every municipality extending the death and disability provisions to its reserve officers must have a five member reserve officer board of trustees to administer the provisions of the system. Every municipality with volunteer fire fighters must have a five member board of trustees to administer the provisions of the pension and relief system. Every emergency medical service district must have a six member board of trustees to administer the pension and relief system: three members of the county legislative authority or their designees, the county auditor or designee, the head of the emergency medical service district, and one emergency worker from the district to be elected by the emergency workers.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Municipalities have the option of providing reserve officers medical benefits under the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension System. The cost of medical benefits will be borne by the municipalities choosing to provide medical coverage under the system.

The death benefit provided where there is no surviving spouse is increased to \$1,275 per month for the youngest or only child, plus \$110 per month for each additional child, to a maximum monthly benefit of \$2,550. Where there are no surviving children or surviving spouse, the benefit received by a dependent parent is increased to \$1,275 per month.

Emergency medical service district board of trustees shall consist of five members, rather than six: two members of the county legislative authority or their designees, the county auditor or designee, the head of the emergency medical service district and one emergency worker to be elected by the emergency workers of the district.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill makes technical and clarifying changes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 1999.

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

Testimony For: When HB 1939 was passed last year, it was believed that in addition to extending death and disability benefits to reserve law enforcement officers, medical benefits were also included. Because of a drafting error, medical benefits were inadvertently left out of that bill. This bill corrects that and would put into law what was intended last year. The bill would level the playing field and allow the same benefits to be extended to reserve officers that are available to volunteer fire fighters.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Val Ogden, prime sponsor; and Mike Matson, Washington State Reserve Law Enforcement Association.