
Transportation Committee

HB 2357

Brief Description: Establishing a state patrol longevity bonus.

Sponsors: Representatives Fey, Barkis, Hutchins, Robertson, Leavitt, Schmidt, Shavers, Nance, Bronoske, Paul, Timmons and Caldier.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires a longevity bonus of \$7,500 be paid to Washington State Patrol (WSP) employees achieving 25 years of commissioned service.
- Requires a longevity bonus of \$15,000 be paid to WSP employees achieving 26 or more years of commissioned service.
- Excludes the bonus from the calculation of salary for the purposes of determining pension benefits.
- Requires the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to conduct a performance review of the WSP longevity bonus pilot program by November 1, 2028.
- Expires the program on June 30, 2029.

Hearing Date: 1/22/24

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7140).

Background:

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) is responsible for traffic law enforcement, collision investigation, criminal interdiction, terrorism prevention, and motorist assistance on the interstate and state highway systems. Commissioned staff include a field force of 683 trooper positions and an estimated 250 commissioned non-field force positions supported by the transportation

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budget. As of November 2023, vacancy rates are estimated at about 23 percent. In 2024, 122 commissioned staff will be eligible for retirement.

The Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS) is the retirement plan available to commissioned WSP employees. Members can retire at age 55 with 5 years of service or at any age with 25 years of service. Members are subject to mandatory retirement at age 65 unless they are serving as the Chief.

Compensation and personnel matters for troopers are collectively bargained between the state and the troopers' exclusive bargaining representative.

Summary of Bill:

The WSP is directed to issue longevity bonuses as follows:

- on July 1, 2024, \$7,500 to eligible commissioned employees having completed 25 years or more of service;
- beginning on July 1, 2024, \$7,500 to eligible commissioned employees completing 25 years of service on the employee's anniversary date of commissioned state employment; and
- beginning on July 1, 2024, \$15,000 to eligible commissioned employees completing 26 or more years of service on the employee's anniversary date of commissioned state employment.

An "eligible commissioned employee" is defined to mean a WSP employee serving in a commissioned position for 25 or more years of commissioned service.

Intent language states that the bonus is time-limited and targeted at retaining senior personnel and is not intended to be included in average final salary for purposes of calculating pension benefits.

Within the WSPRS authorizing statutes, the definition of salary is amended to exclude earnings from the longevity bonus.

By November 1, 2028, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee must conduct a performance review of the WSP longevity bonus pilot program. The performance review must evaluate, at minimum:

- the program's impact on retention of senior commissioned staff at the WSP;
- the change in vacancies in each of the commissioned staff categories over time;
- an evaluation of optimal commissioned staffing levels at the WSP, including comparisons to other states' field force staffing levels;
- a description of other factors that may be impacting retention and vacancy rates; and
- recommendations for addressing WSP staffing levels, which must include whether to continue the program.

The program expires June 30, 2029.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 13, 2024.

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