

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2357

As of February 20, 2024

Title: An act relating to establishment of a state patrol longevity bonus.

Brief Description: Establishing a state patrol longevity bonus.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Fey, Barkis, Hutchins, Robertson, Leavitt, Schmidt, Shavers, Nance, Bronoske, Paul, Timmons and Caldier).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/24, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/20/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Washington State Patrol (WSP) longevity bonus program with a bonus of \$15,000 paid to employees achieving 26 or more years of service.
- Expires the WSP longevity bonus program on June 30, 2029.
- 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.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: The Washington State Patrol (WSP) is responsible for traffic law enforcement, collision investigation, criminal interdiction, terrorism prevention, and

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

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 budget. As of November 2023 vacancy rates are estimated at about 23 percent.

The Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS) is the retirement plan available to commissioned WSP employees. Members can retire at age 55 with five 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. In 2024, 122 commissioned staff will be eligible for retirement.

Compensation and personnel matters for troopers, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains are collectively bargained between their exclusive bargaining representatives and the state.

Summary of Bill: Beginning on July 1, 2024, the WSP is directed to issue \$15,000 annual longevity bonuses to eligible employees completing 26 or more years of service, on the employee's anniversary date of state employment.

Intent language is included that states that the bonus is time-limited and targeted at retaining senior personnel. The WSP longevity bonus program expires on June 30, 2029.

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 program. The performance review must evaluate, at minimum:

- the 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 WSP longevity bonus program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We have serious problems on our highways

with people behaving poorly and putting others at risk. Due to the vacancies in the State Patrol ranks, we do not have the troopers to adequately address this problem. This is a temporary policy, but it builds off of previous efforts. There have been past efforts to improve the competitiveness of State Patrol salaries compared to local governments designed to improve retention. Recently, the state took a variety of actions including bonuses for cadet hires, establishing lateral hiring bonuses, and providing retention bonuses for current commissioned staff. However, this still hasn't solved the problem and we still have a long way to go. With the high number of retirement eligible staff, if not addressed, additional turnover could make the problem worse. Recruitment and retention is an on-going challenge. Retention of senior staff is another area worthy of focus. This new bonus will allow us to retain staff that mentor, train, and instill the traditions of the State Patrol in the younger troopers.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Jake Fey, Prime Sponsor; Jason Linn, Washington State Patrol Lieutenants and Captains Association (WSPLCA); Spike Unruh, Washington State Patrol Troopers Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.