
Appropriations Committee

HB 1312

Brief Description: Paying state retirement benefits until the end of the month in which the retiree or beneficiary dies.

Sponsors: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Reeves, Couture, Davis, Paul, Simmons, Reed, Macri, Tharinger, Donaghy and Scott; by request of Select Committee on Pension Policy.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that pension benefit payments made from the state retirement systems during the month of death be paid through the end of the month in which the death occurs.
- Includes pension payments from the Judges', Judicial, Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters', Teachers', School Employees', Public Safety Employees', Public Employees', and Washington State Patrol Retirement Systems.

Hearing Date: 1/27/25

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

When a recipient of a pension or annuity from the Washington State Retirement Systems is living at the time their monthly pension is paid, the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) pays that pension for the entire month. Recipients of those monthly benefits are only entitled to payment until the date of death; however, meaning that many individuals receive benefits for a portion of the month after their death, which can result in survivors having to repay a portion of the final pension payment received during the month of the member's death. The DRS issues an invoice to the deceased member's estate for the repayment of benefits.

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.

When an individual dies before a monthly benefit payment is paid, the payment is prorated. Typically the DRS makes benefits payments during the later part of each month, so a typical repayment required of the deceased member's estate is for three or four days worth of benefits.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning January 1, 2026, monthly benefits paid to annuitants in the Judges', Judicial, Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters', Teachers', School Employees', Public Safety Employees', Public Employees', and Washington State Patrol Retirement Systems must be paid through the end of the month in which the beneficiary dies. This applies to all benefit payments made by the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS), including optional annuities. The bill does not apply retroactively to refund payments made to the DRS prior to January 1, 2026.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2026.