

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6073

As of January 22, 2026

Title: An act relating to membership of wildland or aviation firefighters in the law enforcement officers' and firefighters' retirement system.

Brief Description: Concerning membership of wildland or aviation firefighters in the law enforcement officers' and firefighters' retirement system.

Sponsors: Senators Lovick, Bateman, Nobles and Saldaña; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 1/22/26.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds firefighters working for the Department of Natural Resources to the Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters' Retirement System.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Amanda Cecil (786-7460)

Background: The Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters' Retirement System Plan 2 (LEOFF 2) provides retirement and disability benefits to full-time, fully compensated general authority law enforcement officers and firefighters.

LEOFF 2 has a normal retirement age of 53. Retirement benefits are calculated as a percentage of a member's average final salary: 2 percent per year for the first 15 years of service; 2.5 percent per year for years 16 through 25; and 2 percent per year for service beyond 25 years. Members with at least 20 years of service may qualify for enhanced early retirement benefits. Disability benefits are provided to members who are disabled, or catastrophically disabled, in the line of duty.

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.

LEOFF employers are primarily local government entities, including cities, towns, counties, and fire districts. In 1996, LEOFF eligibility was expanded to include firefighters employed by four-year institutions of higher education with fully operational fire departments. In 2017, LEOFF 2 eligibility was further expanded to include firefighters employed by the Department of Corrections and the Department of Social and Health Services. At the time of both expansions, existing employees were allowed to remain in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) or to earn LEOFF 2 service credit on a prospective basis.

Employees of state agencies whose positions do not meet the employer or employee definitions for LEOFF 2, including employees of the Department of Natural Resources, generally participate in PERS Plans 2 or 3.

PERS Plans 2 and 3 have a normal retirement age of 65. PERS Plan 2 provides a defined benefit based on 2 percent of a member's average final salary for each year of service. PERS Plan 3 provides a defined benefit equal to 1 percent of average final salary per year of service, combined with a defined contribution benefit.

Summary of Bill: Membership in LEOFF 2 is expanded to include firefighters employed by the Department of Natural Resources. Eligible employees must meet firefighter qualification standards established by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

For purposes of defining full-time wildland or aviation firefighter, "full-time" means an expectation of employment for at least 160 hours per month for more than six months in a year.

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: Wildland firefighters perform extremely dangerous, physically demanding work that puts significant strain on their bodies and health, and they deserve a secure, firefighter-appropriate retirement. Wildland fires burn as intensely as structural fires and that these workers routinely risk their lives using heavy equipment, hand tools, and aircraft to protect communities and natural resources. DNR recognizes the growing physical and mental health risks faced by wildland firefighters as wildfire severity increases due to climate impacts.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Seamus Petrie, Washington Public Employees Association; George Geissler, Department of Natural Resources.

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