

SB 425 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Prepared By: Tyler Larson, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/11, 3/16

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Finds and declares that telecommunicators are first responders. Adds telecommunicator to definition of police officer for purposes of Public Employee Retirement System (PERS). Provides that telecommunicator employed on effective date of Act is entitled to service in PERS as police officer for all service performed as telecommunicator.

REVENUE: no impact

FISCAL: no impact

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Nature of emergency telecommunication work
- Barriers to recruiting and retaining emergency telecommunication workers
- Requirement to maintain qualification of PERS as qualified governmental retirement plan and trust under the Internal Revenue Code

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Replaces the measure. Finds and declares that telecommunicators are first responders.

BACKGROUND:

The Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) provides retirement benefits for state agencies and approximately 900 units of local government. PERS is overseen by a five-member board that appoints an executive director to manage the agency's daily operations including the management of benefits for more than 378,000 active, inactive, and retired members and beneficiaries. PERS is a hybrid pension plan that includes a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan. Retirement benefits vary by the hire date of the member, with Tier One and Tier Two members hired before August 28, 2003, eligible for more generous benefits and earlier minimum retirement ages.

Most PERS members are eligible for full retirement benefits after 30 years of service or at the minimum retirement age, which ranges from 58 to 65. Telecommunicators, defined as emergency communicators and public safety dispatchers, are generally eligible for full retirement benefits after 25 years of service or at the minimum retirement age of 55 for some members. Police officers and firefighters can be eligible for full benefits with less than 25 years of service and generally have the lowest minimum retirement age.

Senate Bill 425 finds and declares that telecommunicators are first responders, and includes telecommunicators under the definition of police officers for the purpose of determining PERS benefits. The measure entitles telecommunicators who are already in the PERS system to retirement credit as police officers, and places all future telecommunicator hires into the police officer category.