



## **HB 2875: Provides that State Fire Marshall employee qualifies as firefighter under PERS**

Testimony by Brenda Gilmer for Joint Ways and Means Committee – 4.22.2021 hearing

Tax Fairness Oregon has observed, studied, and presented testimony related to PERS for five years, most recently during the 2019 Regular Session when SB187, which provided that a judicial marshal qualifies as a police officer under PERS, was considered. We repeat:

Although we have learned a great deal, fully understanding PERS often feels like wading through mud! We have a few lessons to offer that we hope will guide your thinking.

Lesson #1 Oregon’s public pension plan is one of the most complex structures in the nation. It also has some of the most generous benefits, particularly for Tiers I and II.

Lesson #2 Complexity can lead to legislative decisions that seem prudent, but in the end, only lead to more complex problems.

Lesson #3 PERS currently has complicated and costly issues to solve; a sizable portion of the costs are direct results of past legislative decisions that seemed prudent at the time.

HB 2875 would qualify a State Fire Marshall employee whose primary duties are fire investigation, fire prevention, fire safety, fire control or fire suppression as a firefighter under PERS.

HB 2875 is not the only bill this session that would expand rather than contract the highest cost PERS classifications. SB 425 declares “telecommunicators” as “first responders,” taking a windier path to the same destination reached by judicial marshals.

The highest cost classifications. The lowest retirement ages.

**We strongly urged you to follow the recommendations of the PERS senior policy director. Until the legislature has solved the current funding status of PERS, it is not prudent to be adding members to the highest cost classification.**

*We read the bills and follow the money*