

~~Public Safety Officer Retirement Benefits~~ Public Safety Officer Retirement Benefits

This bill deals with mandatory retirement of public safety officers and their associated retirement benefits. From a state perspective, officers included in mandatory retirement provisions are commissioned officers of the Department of Safety (Troopers) and TBI, wildlife officers, and officers of the Alcoholic Beverage Commission. Coverage in local governments includes police officers and firefighters if the respective local government has passed a resolution accepting the liability for the additional retirement cost associated with mandatory retirement and the enhanced benefits.

In general, a member is eligible to retire on service retirement benefits at any age with 30 years of service, or at age 60 with 5 years of service. Alternatively, a member may retire on a reduced (early) retirement benefit upon attaining age 55 or with 25 years of service. In addition, members covered by mandatory retirement at age 60 are also entitled to an additional bridge benefit until the onset of social security benefits at age 62.

Coupled with an age 60 mandatory retirement age, this bill changed two aspects of the retirement benefits for public safety officers:

- Allow unreduced retirement benefits upon attainment of age 55 with 25 years of service.
- Allow the bridge benefit to begin at age 55 and continue to age 62.

TCRS will be performing a biennial actuarial valuation during the next few months. The results will include an estimated cost for local governments. As a general rule of thumb, the mandatory retirement with the expanded benefits noted in this bill will cost the state approximately 3% of payroll of those persons affected.

This provision is optional to local governments. In other words, unless the local government agrees to accept the liability and cost associated with this provision, employees are not subject to mandatory retirement provisions nor are they entitled to the expanded benefits or bridge benefits.

Notes:

- ✓ Mandatory retirement provisions –
 - Age 60, except
 - Department Head (Chief, Sheriff, etc.) is exempt
 - If more than 50% of job duties are in an administrative or supervisory capacity, the mandatory retirement age is deferred until age 62.
 - If the local government passes the mandatory retirement provision, all public safety officers must participate, except as noted above.
- ✓ A public safety officer is defined as firefighters and POST certified police officers who are engaged in law enforcement or firefighting activities on a day-to-day basis. Typically, 911 dispatchers, jailers, EMS personnel, etc. are not included in the retirement definition of public safety officer.
- ✓ Local governments may defer enforcing the mandatory retirement requirement until July 1 of the year following passage of the resolution to allow current employees already at age 60 or above time to plan for their retirement.