

HCS HB 664 -- FIREMEN'S RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF ST. LOUIS

SPONSOR: Leara

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Retirement by a vote of 11 to 0.

This substitute changes the laws regarding the Firemen's Retirement System of St. Louis. In its main provisions, the substitute:

(1) Specifies that the retirement plan is intended to be a qualified governmental plan under applicable federal law and requires the benefits and conditions of the plan to be interpreted and the system to be operated to ensure that the system meets the federal qualification requirements;

(2) Changes the laws regarding members who retire because of accidental disability as follows:

(a) Any member retiring because of accidental disability based on a condition of the heart, lungs, or cancer or based on permanent and total disability which will prevent the member from obtaining employment elsewhere, as determined by the board of trustees of the retirement system, based on medical evidence presented by the retirement system's physicians will receive, regardless of his or her years of credible service, 75% of the earnable compensation for the step in range of salary for the title or rank held by the member at the time of his or her retirement;

(b) Any member retiring because of accidental disability for a condition not stated above will receive a base pension equal to 25% of his or her salary at the time of retirement plus, for members having 25 years or less of creditable service at retirement, an additional 2.75% for each year of creditable service equal to or greater than 10 years but not more than 25 years. A member with more than 25 years of creditable service will receive an additional pension equal to 50% of his or her salary;

(c) A member can elect to receive an education allowance in an amount not to exceed the tuition for a state resident at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The member must enroll in a college, university, community college, or vocational or technical school at the first opportunity after retirement, and the member will be reimbursed upon proof of payment to the institution. The education allowance must cease if the member is no longer a full-time student or if he or she is restored to active service as a firefighter. The education allowance cannot

be available for more than five years after the member retires. A member with 25 years or less of creditable service electing to receive the education allowance who is a full-time student can also receive a supplemental disability retirement pension in an amount that will pay him or her 100% of the member's active duty salary for up to five years;

(d) A member with more than 20 years but less than 25 years of creditable service may waive the right to receive the education allowance, the additional pension allowance, and the supplemental disability retirement pension and may elect instead to receive in addition to the accidental disability retirement base pension an additional pension equal to 40% of the member's salary at the time of retirement if the election was made prior to receiving his or her first accidental disability pension payment; and

(e) The retirement allowance will be increased annually in October for a member who retired due to accidental disability on or after August 28, 2011, for a reason other than based on a condition of the heart, lungs, or cancer or based on a permanent and total disability which prevents the member from obtaining employment elsewhere, unless a member has more than 25 years of creditable service, the accidental disability allowance can only increase at a rate of 1% per year, compounded each year, up to age 60, then 5% per year for five years. For a member having more than 25 years of creditable service, the accidental disability allowance can only increase at a rate of 2.25% per year, compounded each year, up to age 60, then 5% per year for five years; and

(3) Changes, effective October 1, 2011, the method the system's actuaries use to calculate the amount of the contribution required from the city each year from the current fixed initial liability method to the entry age normal funding method.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will save St. Louis City money by changing the method the system's actuaries use to calculate the amount of the annual contribution required from the city from the current fixed initial liability method to the entry age normal funding method. The legislation will simplify the annual funding requirements.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Leara; and Bruce Williams, Firemen's Retirement System of St. Louis.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.