

PSERS Employer Definition

Issue

Corrections officers employed by a soon-to-open multi-city jail will be excluded from membership in the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) due to a technicality in the PSERS statutes.

The agency operating the new jail asked for the PSERS employer definition to be amended so they can be a PSERS employer and their corrections officers will be covered by PSERS.

Background

The South Correctional Entity (SCORE) is a multi-jurisdictional agency created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act (RCW 39.34). SCORE's mission is to build and operate a shared jail for the cities of Auburn, Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way, Renton, SeaTac, and Tukwila. The facility is expected to open in the fall 2011 and will employ 124 full-time corrections officers.

Under current statute, corrections officers employed by SCORE will be members of the Public Employees' Retirement System. This includes both newly hired officers and PSERS members who transfer from other jails. This situation arises because the PSERS statutory definition of employer, while including city corrections departments, does not include correction departments created by interlocal agreement between cities.

Staff is aware of no other facilities similarly situated with SCORE.

Policy Highlights

- ❖ This issue concerns updating statute to maintain existing pension policy regarding PSERS membership—not setting new pension policy.
- ❖ The stakeholder proposal does not expand PSERS membership beyond the original intent of the Legislature and the SCPP.

Committee Activity

The committee considered this issue at the October meeting and recommended legislation as detailed below.

Recommendation To 2011 Legislature

Amend the list of PSERS-eligible employers to include public corrections entities formed by counties, cities, or both.

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