

WSPRS Service Credit Buyback

Issue

Troopers with prior Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) service credit as Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Officers (CVEOs) or Communication Officers (COs) were seeking to consolidate their service into the Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS).

Background

Troopers are fully commissioned law enforcement officers with general law enforcement authority. CVEOs and COs are limited authority Washington State Patrol (WSP) officers. CVEO duties include inspecting payloads, enforcing safety requirements, and manning weigh stations. COs duties include dispatch and relay of emergency calls (911 operators).

Troopers are members of WSPRS. All COs and CVEOs hired prior to 2006 are members of PERS. In 2006, the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) opened. Since then, newly hired CVEOs are members of PSERS.

Some troopers started their WSP careers as CVEOs or COs and later become fully commissioned troopers. These members may have their WSP service in both PERS (CVEO or CO) and WSPRS (trooper).

Dual membership is the general rule for members with service credit in more than one retirement system. Dual membership provisions allow dual-members to treat their service in separate systems as one unbroken career. For example, dual-members may combine service for determining retirement eligibility and may use the highest salary average from either system in calculating retirement benefits.

In 2002, an exception to dual membership was granted to some troopers with prior PERS service as CVEOs. These troopers were allowed to consolidate their CVEO service into WSPRS. However, the 2002 consolidation provisions did not cover all troopers with prior PERS CVEO service.

Policy Highlights

- ❖ Some troopers with prior service as a CVEO were allowed to consolidate their service into WSPRS—others were not.
- ❖ Troopers with prior service as a CO have not been given the option of consolidating their service credit.

- ❖ The Legislature has allowed some exceptions to dual membership (e.g. consolidation of service credit) in some cases where the prior service is substantially related to the current service.
- ❖ Policy makers may wish to decide whether CVEO service, CO service, or both, are substantially related to service as a commissioned trooper.
- ❖ There is not likely to be a cost to the system since the participating troopers would pay the full actuarial cost of the service transfer.

Committee Activity

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

Recommendation To 2011 Legislature

Give certain WSPRS members who served as CVEOs and COs the option to transfer past service (and contributions) from PERS to WSPRS.

Staff Contact

Aaron Gutierrez
Policy Analyst
360.786.6152
aaron.gutierrez@leg.wa.gov

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