

**December 18, 2012**

## **Select Committee on Pension Policy**

**RE: Retire-Rehire Correction (DRS Bill Draft)**

**Dear SCPP Members;**

Upon graduation from WSU, I began working with the University of Washington Police Department in June of 1972. At that time police officers at the four-year universities were in the PERS I system.

In 1977, police officers at all state four-year universities and the Port of Seattle were granted participation in the state's LEOFF retirement system. Those of us in PERS I at that time were given the option of remaining in PERS I or transferring into the LEOFF II system. Based on the rules at that time, which did not preclude re-employment in higher-ed for PERS I retirees, I chose to stay in the PERS I system.

I continued to work at the UW for thirty years, including a two-year assignment (2001-02) as the Commander of the State's Basic Law Enforcement Academy. I retired from the UW in June of 2002 at the rank of captain and began receiving my PERS I pension in July of that year.

I worked as a facilities director and a capital projects director and was away from law enforcement for five years. I felt that my training and experience were not being fully utilized and I missed the involvement in policing. The Chief of Police/Director of Public Safety position opened at Western Washington University, so I applied in October of 2007.

After an initial screening process, I was invited to Bellingham along with three other finalists; all out of state candidates. An independent testing firm, contracted by Western, scored and rated the assessment center process. I was selected as one of two finalists and returned to Bellingham for a two-day series of interviews and open forums with campus and community groups. Just as any other new recruit, or out-of-state candidate, I completed a polygraph examination, a psychological exam and a background investigation after being selected for the position. I returned to the State Law Enforcement Academy as a student, having to complete the "Equivalency Academy" because my state certification as a police officer had expired.

My case is hardly one of retire-rehire into the same position! I competed fairly for my current job and made life choices based upon the rules of the retirement process. I am now participating in the TIAA-CREF program and I am not a part of any DRS program.

With the suspension of my PERS retirement after working 867 hours this year, I am forced to strongly consider leaving Western for employment in the private sector that will restore my full retirement benefits. I know that Western does not want to lose me. They are more than satisfied with the level of expertise I bring to the University and the job I am doing for them. I love my job and love Western...and I love serving in law enforcement. I am a member of WASPC's Executive Board and I chair the University Policing Committee of that organization.

Aside from the personal hardship this change has brought to my family, the real issues I am asking you to address are those of fairness and equity. Retirees from WSP and LEOFF were not affected by these rule changes. Some of my colleagues (the Chief's at Eastern and the Evergreen State College, and the Deputy Chief at Eastern) all served this state as "general authority" law enforcement officers for thirty years, just as I did, but they are not dealing with the suspension of their retirements, nor should they.

I am not the type of person who likes to "rock-the boat," but I do feel that the inequity and unfairness in how I am being handled is not right. Although I have returned to work at a state institution of higher education, it is a different institution, a different position, and one for which I fairly competed with numerous other candidates, including the three out-of state finalists.

I am respectfully requesting consideration of amending language in this bill that would address the inconsistency between my circumstance as a PERS I retiree now in a LEOFF eligible, general authority law enforcement position and the WSP,LEOFF and other system retirees in identical law enforcement positions. Please allow PERS I retirees to be exempted from the suspension of retirement benefits when returning to work in law enforcement/public safety (LEOFF II eligible) positions at higher education institutions.

With most sincere gratitude and appreciation,



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