



TEAMSTERS LOCAL UNION 117

Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

General Public and Private Sector Employees and Special Services Employees in King and Pierce Counties and Employees of the State of Washington



August 20, 2012

Select Committee on Pension Policy
P.O. Box 40914
Olympia, WA 98504-0914

To Whom It May Concern:

Teamsters Local 117 represents a large variety of public safety employees primarily working for the Washington State Department of Corrections Prisons Division, local and state law enforcement agencies, and Emergency 9-1-1 Centers. These employees should be considered for the Public Safety Employees Retirement System (PSERS) as the responsibilities of their job classifications come with one or more of the following risks:

- High degree of physical risk
- High stress environment
- Potential exposure to severe risk on a daily basis
- Responsibility to provide public protection of lives and/or property
- High physical demands
- Exposure to violent criminal activity and its aftermath
- Minimal opportunity to advance into managerial/supervisory roles

Washington State Department of Corrections Prisons Division:

All employees in the Washington Prisons Division should be eligible to participate in PSERS. There is not one individual working in a prison that is not responsible for the safety and security of that prison through the monitoring of the inmates housed there. The responsibility of monitoring inmates can come in the form of an office assistant that is responsible for the inmate janitor that works in his/her office, a maintenance worker who runs a ten (10) inmate work crew, or a cook who monitors multiple inmates in the kitchen with access to dangerous weapons such as knives. Additionally, medical staff, mental health professionals, and classification counselors are repeatedly placed in a one on one environment with inmates of all custody levels. The potential risk of an assault in a one on one scenario is immense. The stressful nature of the prison environment, the heightened alert that every employee must be in while working in the prison, the constant threat of an assault at any moment, and the inability to promote to a position outside of the prison causes many problems for aging workers. Please consider these factors during your review of PSERS eligible classifications.

Local and State Law Enforcement Agencies:

Local and state law enforcement agencies non-commissioned staff suffers a high risk of stress and physical harm. Property, forensics, and animal control officers are just a few of these

positions. The duties of these employees include responding to the most heinous crime scenes imaginable for processing and collecting evidence, making contact with individuals that can become belligerent and aggressive at any moment, protecting the public from dangerous animals, and physical demands that include lifting, climbing, and running extended distances. Their schedules are ever changing as they are expected to be available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and at a moment's notice. This includes on call duty where they may be expected to respond to a crime scene in the middle of the night. There are documented cases of these individuals being assaulted by someone they come in contact with in the community or by a suspect returning to a crime scene that they have been left alone at to process. The idea of these individuals being able to maintain these types of schedules along with the ongoing stress caused by the circumstances they are exposed to justifies their participation in PSERS.

Emergency 9-1-1 Center Personnel:

Emergency 9-1-1 center personnel are true first responders. These individuals are the life line to the community when they are in their most vulnerable state. Every 9-1-1 call or radio transmission has the potential for a life or death scenario. Employees in this field can change a life in the matter of seconds. The stress of giving a mother CPR instructions for her infant that is not breathing, hearing a person commit suicide, or coordinating a police response for an "officer down" call has a significant impact their physiological well being. Along with the stress of the position itself, E9-1-1 personnel frequently work rotating shifts with significant amounts of mandatory overtime. These employees are "essential staff" and are expected to respond to work during natural disasters, massive critical incidents, and terrorist attacks. They are held to same level of responsibility as police officers and firefighters during emergency situations. Ever changing technology, increased call volume, and the lack of advancement opportunities are additional factors to consider when looking at the appropriate retirement age for individuals in this line of work.

Please consider the information I have provided above when identifying groups for evaluation of inclusion into the Public Safety Employees Retirement System. These individuals dedicate their lives to provide protection to our communities. They earn the right to retire from these positions rather than being forced to make a career change when they are no longer mentally and/or physically able to perform the core functions of their positions. If you would like additional information or have questions about specific classifications we represent, please contact me at Michelle.Woodrow@teamsters117.org.

Sincerely,



Michelle Woodrow
Acting Director of Corrections and Law Enforcement

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