



WASHINGTON STATE PATROL TROOPERS ASSOCIATION

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May 14, 2014

The Honorable Timm Ormsby, Chairman
Select Committee on Pension Policy
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Representative Ormsby,

On behalf of the members of the WA State Patrol Troopers Association I would like to share a growing and serious problem that currently exists within the department. 500 officers are eligible to retire in the next 3 years, 108 by the end of 2014. 5.6 FTE's per month left the department from July 2013 through December 2013, this alarming as this is usually the time of year we have the slowest rate of attrition. The department's ability to retain experienced highly skilled officers has become critical.

Coupled with the fact that the recruitment of new officers has also become seriously problematic. Over the course of the last two years the department has been funded to 120 new positions, was only able to hire 69 and only 57 of those graduated from the training academy. The WSP struggles to compete and falls further behind the salaries of varied local police departments around the state and is currently 124th in entry level pay.

Recruitment of new trainees and the retention of experienced officers is a major problem. Retirement benefits are generally not a top priority to young applicants but pensions become a very important to the more senior officers. There is no simple answer to the retention problem but we would like to explore some incentives that would make staying on the job for the state of Washington a little more attractive.

We feel a carefully crafted Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) would be a good step in the right direction. The Washington State Patrol Retirement System allows for Troopers to retire with 25 or more years. Senior Troopers could be retained using a DROP authorized in the IRS Code. A Trooper opting into DROP defers retirement past the date of eligibility, but begins to accrue retirement benefits. Those benefits are held in trust and earn interest on behalf of the Trooper. The accumulated benefits are then distributed when the Trooper surrenders his/her Commission.

We respectfully request that the Select Committee on Pension Policy review the benefits of a DROP for the WSPRS that would be a step forward in solving a critical retention problem. Your consideration will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom".

Tom Pillow, President

CC: Matt Smith, OSA
Rick Jensen, WSPTA Governmental Affairs