



SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #3

August 31, 2015

Honorable Senator Mark Schoesler

Olympia WA

Dear Senator Schoesler:

Pursuant to our conversation by phone last Friday I am writing you outlining the problem with the pension system regarding volunteer firefighters who are minimally compensated for their service. Because they are compensated they are considered part time employees even though they respond as typical volunteers.

The issue we have is with the PERS retirement system rules that state if you are a PERS department any part time firefighter working over 69 hours a month for four months in a year has to join the PERS retirement system. These same firefighters are eligible to be covered by the volunteer relief and pension system as long as they are not eligible for the LEOFF system. All departments that don't have PERS employees cover their part time firefighters with the Volunteer Relief and Pension System. Reality is most organizations that compensate their volunteers have a secretary and/or mechanic that are covered by PERS so they encounter this problem. We compared the benefits of the two systems and the volunteer system has greater retirement benefits and a death benefit for the folks that the PERS system doesn't have. We feel that the part time folks will be short changed if they are forced to go into PERS.

As a result of these rules we have people that are available to continue to go out and work these fires we are encountering but because they will go over hours this month we cannot allow them to continue working. We will have to bring some of our rigs back home and park them and not be able to continue to help. We cannot jeopardize their retirement system eligibility.

In our opinion we only need to have our firefighters covered by one of two systems. We need to use the LEOFF system for full time career folks and the Volunteer Relief and Pension system for those that do not qualify for the LEOFF system. Forcing them into PERS will leave them with a lesser benefit especially the loss of the line of duty death benefit.

Thanks for your consideration and help with this matter.

Yours Truly

Bruce Holloway

Bruce Holloway
Fire Chief

PS Our fire district lies in Districts 6, 7 and 9 so I am copying all of the folks from those districts also.

10 S. Presley Dr.
Cheney, WA.
99004

Commissioners:
Ron McKinley, Chairman
Sharon Colby
Howard Marsh Jr.

Phone: 509-235-6645
Fax: 509-235-6183