

State Employees Called Up to Federal Service

Issue

Should federal service during a wildfire, natural disaster, public health crisis, or national emergency be considered duty-related for the purposes of state retirement system death and disability benefits?

Background

Some state and local government employees are called up to federal service in the federal uniformed services¹ to assist with wildfires, natural disasters, public health crises, or national emergencies. If killed or injured while in federal service, these public employees would receive different retirement benefits than public employees killed or injured in the line of duty (in state service) or public employees called to federal service during a period of war.²

The next table shows which types of death and disability benefits a public employee may receive under four key scenarios.

Death and Disability Benefits			
Type of Service	Non-Duty State Retirement Benefits	Line of Duty State Retirement Benefits	Federal Benefits*
State: Non-Duty	X		
State: Line of Duty		X	X**
Federal: During Period of War		X***	X
Federal: Assist with Wildfires, etc.	X		X

*Federal benefits include a wide range of benefits and differ based on certain circumstances.

**Police officers and fire fighters are eligible for certain federal line of duty death and disability benefits.

***Exception: State and local government employees do not receive the lump sum duty-death payment under this scenario.

¹Uniformed services include the armed forces, National Guard, and Public Health Service. Also, federal service in the National Disaster Medical System is treated similarly to service in the uniformed services.

²Period of war as defined in RCW 41.04.005.

Questions for Possible Future Analysis

- ❖ What is the role of the state retirement systems in providing benefits to state and local government employees in federal service?
- ❖ What might be the goal of the state in providing benefits to state and local government employees in federal service?
- ❖ Should there be a distinction between federal service performed within Washington State and federal service performed elsewhere?
- ❖ What types of federal service should be included in any proposed change? Federal service can extend beyond the uniformed services.
- ❖ Is this largely an issue for Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Plan 2 or are other systems also impacted?

Committee Activity

The SCPP considered this issue at the October meeting.

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