
From: Myers, Katy <kmyers@norcom.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 8, 2022 4:47 PM
To: Conway, Sen. Steve; Lelli, Kimberlie; Stokesbary, Rep. Drew; Palermo, Gina; Braun, Sen. John; Peterson, Ruth; Orffer, Nadia; Fitzgibbon, Rep. Joe; Hines, Holly; Ormsby, Rep. Timm; Waechter, Shannon; Robinson, Sen. June; Armstrong, Kate; Schoesler, Sen. Mark; Winters, Krista; Volz, Rep. Mike; Janzen, Phillip; Thompson, J. Pat; Watson, Wally (CVSD); Zabelka, William (SCPP); Matt Zuvich; Creekpaum, Annette; Legard, Dan (SCPP); Hermanson, Beverly; Schumacher, David
Cc: Office State Actuary, WA
Subject: WA APCO-NENA Support and information pertaining to PSTs in PSERS
Attachments: SCPP November Letter.pdf; Public Safety Employee Retirement Eligibility for PSTs.pdf

CAUTION:External email.

Dear Committee Members,

Attached is a letter reflecting our Chapter's support for PSTs' eligibility in PSERS, along with some data points for your reflection. Thank you for taking up this important topic.

Katy



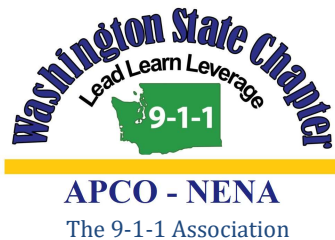
Katy Myers
WA APCO-NENA President

www.waapconena.org

NORCOM Deputy Director of Administrative Services 425-393-9621 (direct) • kmyers@norcom.org

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Katy Myers, President
Washington State Chapter APCO – NENA
911 Carver Street
Bremerton, Washington 98312
Email: President@wapconena.org

November 8, 2022

Select Committee on Pension Policy
PO Box 40914
Olympia, WA 98504-0914

Dear SCPP Members,

On behalf of Washington APCO-NENA, I write to support Public Safety Telecommunicators' (PSTs) eligibility and entry into the Public Safety Employees Retirement System (PSERS), and to provide the Committee information and data for their consideration. Moving Public Safety Telecommunicators into PSERS is necessary for several key reasons:

- 1) PSTs are the first response in public safety with unique environmental stressors
- 2) Technology will bring the scene directly to the PST, adding additional complexities to their already ever-expanding role in emergency response
- 3) PTSD is already recognized in Washington state as an occupational disease for PSTs
- 4) Other States have already successfully accomplished this change

During the last several months, the Committee was asked to consider if there is a benefit of keeping a “burned out” telecommunicator. While there are cases of burnout within our ranks, it isn't a condition that lasts the individual's entire career. Members may experience symptoms of burnout for short durations, receive support and come back to duty multiple times through out their career. And more importantly, many of our members attribute their burnout not from the work itself, but from the lack of acknowledgement and understanding of the job by their communities, professional partners, and others in leadership roles.

Retirement change is just one of the tools to use to improve the work and the environment for our PSTs. The Chapter and PSAPs across the state are working to improve professional recognition, address work impacts, and ensure there is a well trained workforce to answer our communities' calls for help. We have partnered with the state 911 office, higher-education and national associations to improve work environments, training, benefits and treatment for PSTs. The profession is gaining acceptance as its own arm of public safety instead of an adjunct to police or fire response.

Getting PSTs into the most appropriate retirement system benefits the employees, their agencies and our communities. Research by the the International Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials shows that employee satisfaction and retention rates are

Executive Council Representative: Brenda Cantu –
AECRep@wapconena.org
Vice President: Jason Fritz - vp@wapconena.org
Secretary: Kris DeVore– Secretary@wapconena.org
APCO Treasurer: Richard Kirton – AcctsA@wapconena.org

East Side Ambassador: Karen Crawford – ambassadore@wapconena.org
West Side Ambassador: Mary Sue Robey – ambassadorw@wapconena.org
Past President: Lora Ueland – PastPresident@wapconena.org
Commercial Representative: Victor Burton – CommRep@wapconena.org
Special Advisor: Sheryl Mullen - sheryl@wapconena.org

higher if the retirement benefits are equitable to those provided to other public safety occupations. It also estimates that 97% of law enforcement and fire/rescue personnel **will** work long enough to retire; inversely, it estimated that 97% of PSTs **will not** work long enough to retire. The opportunity to retire at 60 versus 65 makes a great difference.

We recognize this is a complex change and the PSAP and PST landscape is diverse. To assist the committee, further information is included with this letter and our Chapter leadership is available for questions.

Appropriate retirement eligibility for Public Safety Telecommunicators is one of several important elements in our comprehensive approach to improve the profession. With SB 5555's passing earlier this year, Public Safety Telecommunicators are now recognized as first responders and will receive standardized minimum training. They should be placed in a pension system consistent with the public safety role they serve. Thank you for considering this critical change for Public Safety Telecommunicators in the state of Washington.

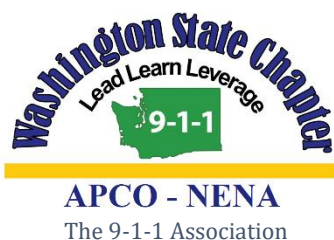
Respectfully,

Katy Myers

Katy Myers, President
WA APCO-NENA

CC: Scott Sigmon, Sigmon Public Affairs
Wendy Hill, Executive Director, TCOMM911
Karl Hatton, Executive Director, PENCOM
Senator Van De Wege

Attachment: Public Safety Employee Retirement Eligibility for PSTs



Public Safety Employee Retirement Eligibility for Public Safety Telecommunicators

Recently the Committee added Secondary PSAPs for inclusion into the bill to be considered. Upon that decision our Chapter reached out to the secondary PSAPs to gather data. Below is overall data the Chapter has gathered from individuals at the listed PSAPs. There are some PSAPs whose employees are current members of LEOFF or PSERS. Some other PSAPs are PERS eligible but are not current participants in PERS.

65 PSAPs could be impacted.	This includes Primary and Secondary PSAPs that are currently eligible for PERS. It excludes tribal, federal, and other PSAP organizations.
There are 1782 authorized positions at these 65 PSAPS.	Between primary and secondary PSAPs we are missing position counts for only four smaller secondary PSAPs in the state. Some of these are currently in LEOFF or PSERS now.
Approximately 1550 individuals could be eligible and interested in moving into PSERS.	The Chapter assumes those in LEOFF would prefer to stay in that system. The missing data for the four secondary PSAPs are smaller in size, and we believe could add 20-30 people.
Average annual salary is \$75,000	We gathered the average salary for 53 of the 65 PSAPs.

The PSAP and PST landscape is diverse. PSAPs can be found in different organizational entities, from a small local police department to a 100+ seat interlocal government authority. The number of authorized PST positions also vary widely from very small, rural 6 position agencies to multidiscipline, consolidated 100+ position agencies.

We respectfully ask for the Committee to consider the following points when drafting the bill.

- Use the definition of a Public Safety Telecommunicator found in SSB-5555, Concerning public safety telecommunicators
- Include Primary and Secondary PSAPs
- Limit eligibility to agencies that are eligible for PERS

Public Safety Employee Retirement Eligibility for Public Safety Telecommunicators

<p style="text-align: center;">Critical Public Safety Job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PST's deal with the same and similar levels of physical and mental stressors as their counterparts in law enforcement and fire response. • Hyper-vigilant environment. High degree of acute and cumulative stress having to go from call to call regardless of outcome with infrequent opportunity for stress relief following a traumatic event. • The skills and procedures necessary to perform the work of PST's parallel that of field first responders. PST's provide guidance and scene safety information for police and fire responders as well as lifesaving pre-arrival instructions for medical calls including first aid and life-saving protocols. • Rapid decision making sometimes with little information and frequent life-impacting consequences. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Technology Advancements Bring Additional Unique Stressors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New technologies are developing allowing the public to communicate with 911 through several different platforms. PST's must be trained on these new technologies and be able to respond appropriately. No longer just one system handling a phone call. • Real time video can be sent to 911 call centers allowing for a one- or two-way conversation with call takers allowing for real time scene situational awareness. PST's can now be brought visually to the scene which can cause additional traumatic stress. • Some of these technologies are increasing the ability for effective interoperability between agencies, bridging the gap between 911 communications, emergency management and other agencies. While positive and much needed, this is bringing 911 into an environment they have not previously operated in and must add these additional responsibilities to an already busy workload.
<p style="text-align: center;">A Retirement System They Belong In</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not an answer to end burn-out. APCO has partnered with other agencies to work on improving work environments. • One of several tools to help with recruitment and retention. We believe that PSERS will help with recruitment and retention, but it is not the be all to end all. • 911 is its own Public Safety Arm • PST's recognized as First Responders in Washington State • PSTs are eligible for PTSD consideration. RCW 51.08.142 excludes mental conditions caused by stress from being classified as occupational disease. The same RCW specifically exempts firefighters, law enforcement officers and PSTs under certain circumstances from this exclusion. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Washington Wouldn't Be Alone</p> <p>Other states and jurisdictions have provided public safety retirement to PSTS</p> <p>2005 State of Wyoming, Law Enforcement Pension Plan</p> <p>2012 State of Arizona, Corrections Officers Retirement Plan</p> <p>2015 State of Utah, Public Safety Retirement Systems</p> <p>2021 Metropolitan Nashville & Davidson County (TN), Fire and Police Service Pension Plan</p> <p>2022 State of Idaho, Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho</p>