

# WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

## 2017 REGULAR SESSION

**Introduced**

### **House Bill 2055**

**FISCAL  
NOTE**

BY DELEGATE RODIGHIERO

[Introduced February 8, 2017; referred to the  
Committee on Banking and Insurance then Finance.]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §5-16-2 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; and to  
 2 amend said code by adding thereto a new section, designated §5-16-27, all relating to  
 3 including volunteer firefighters within the Public Employees Insurance Act and requiring  
 4 the county commissions to pay either three-fourths or the full amount of premiums.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

1 That §5-16-2 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended and  
 2 reenacted; and that said code be amended by adding thereto a new section, designated §5-16-  
 3 27, all to read as follows:

**ARTICLE 16. WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC EMPLOYEES INSURANCE ACT.**

**§5-16-2. Definitions.**

1 The following words and phrases as used in this article, unless a different meaning is  
 2 clearly indicated by the context, have the following meanings:

3 (1) "Agency" means the Public Employees Insurance Agency created by this article.

4 (2) "Director" means the Director of the Public Employees Insurance Agency created by  
 5 this article.

6 (3) "Employee" means any person, including an elected officer, who works regularly full  
 7 time in the service of the State of West Virginia and, for the purpose of this article only, the term  
 8 "employee" also means any person, including an elected officer, who works regularly full time in  
 9 the service of a county board of education; a county, city or town in the state; any separate  
 10 corporation or instrumentality established by one or more counties, cities or towns, as permitted  
 11 by law; any corporation or instrumentality supported in most part by counties, cities or towns; any  
 12 public corporation charged by law with the performance of a governmental function and whose  
 13 jurisdiction is coextensive with one or more counties, cities or towns; any comprehensive  
 14 community mental health center or comprehensive mental retardation facility established,  
 15 operated or licensed by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources pursuant to section one,

16 article two-a, chapter twenty-seven of this code and which is supported in part by state, county or  
17 municipal funds; any person who works regularly full time in the service of the Higher Education  
18 Policy Commission, the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education  
19 or a governing board, as defined in section two, article one, chapter eighteen-b of this code; any  
20 person who works regularly full time in the service of a combined city-county health department  
21 created pursuant to article two, chapter sixteen of this code; any person designated as a 21st  
22 Century Learner Fellow pursuant to section eleven, article three, chapter eighteen-a of this code;  
23 and any person who works as a long-term substitute as defined in section one, article one, chapter  
24 eighteen-a of this code in the service of a county board of education: *Provided*, That a long-term  
25 substitute who is continuously employed for at least one hundred thirty-three instructional days  
26 during an instructional term, and until the end of that instructional term, is eligible for the benefits  
27 provided in this article until September 1, following that instructional term: *Provided, however*,  
28 That a long-term substitute employed fewer than one hundred thirty-three instructional days  
29 during an instructional term is eligible for the benefits provided in this article only during such time  
30 as he or she is actually employed as a long-term substitute. ~~On and after January 1, 1994, and~~  
31 Upon election by a county board of education to allow elected board members to participate in  
32 the Public Employees Insurance Program pursuant to this article, any person elected to a county  
33 board of education shall be considered to be an "employee" during the term of office of the elected  
34 member. Upon election by the State Board of Education to allow appointed board members to  
35 participate in the Public Employees Insurance Program pursuant to this article, any person  
36 appointed to the State Board of Education is considered an "employee" during the term of office  
37 of the appointed member: *Provided further*, That the elected member of a county board of  
38 education and the appointed member of the State Board of Education shall pay the entire cost of  
39 the premium if he or she elects to be covered under this article. Any matters of doubt as to who  
40 is an employee within the meaning of this article shall be decided by the director.

41 ~~(A) On or after July 1, 1997~~ A person shall be considered an "employee" if that person  
42 meets the following criteria:

43 (i) Participates in a job-sharing arrangement as defined in section one, article one, chapter  
44 eighteen-a of this code;

45 (ii) Has been designated, in writing, by all other participants in that job-sharing  
46 arrangement as the "employee" for purposes of this section; and

47 (iii) Works at least one third of the time required for a full-time employee.

48 (B) On or after July 1, 2017, a person working as a volunteer firefighter under article fifteen,  
49 chapter eight of this code, is considered an "employee" under this section.

50 (4) "Employer" means the State of West Virginia, its boards, agencies, commissions,  
51 departments, institutions or spending units; a county board of education; a county, city or town in  
52 the state; any separate corporation or instrumentality established by one or more counties, cities  
53 or towns, as permitted by law; any corporation or instrumentality supported in most part by  
54 counties, cities or towns; any public corporation charged by law with the performance of a  
55 governmental function and whose jurisdiction is coextensive with one or more counties, cities or  
56 towns; any comprehensive community mental health center or comprehensive mental retardation  
57 facility established, operated or licensed by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources  
58 pursuant to section one, article two-a, chapter twenty-seven of this code and which is supported  
59 in part by state, county or municipal funds; a combined city-county health department created  
60 pursuant to article two, chapter sixteen of this code; and a corporation meeting the description set  
61 forth in section three, article twelve, chapter eighteen-b of this code that is employing a 21st  
62 Century Learner Fellow pursuant to section eleven, article three, chapter eighteen of this code  
63 but the corporation is not considered an employer with respect to any employee other than a 21st  
64 Century Learner Fellow. For purposes of this article, the county commission in which a volunteer  
65 fire department is located is considered the "employer" of volunteer firefighters for the purposes

66 of the Public Employees Insurance Act. Any matters of doubt as to who is an "employer" within  
67 the meaning of this article shall be decided by the director. The term "employer" does not include  
68 within its meaning the National Guard.

69 (5) "Finance board" means the Public Employees Insurance Agency finance board created  
70 by this article.

71 (6) "Person" means any individual, company, association, organization, corporation or  
72 other legal entity, including, but not limited to, hospital, medical or dental service corporations;  
73 health maintenance organizations or similar organization providing prepaid health benefits; or  
74 individuals entitled to benefits under the provisions of this article.

75 (7) "Plan", unless the context indicates otherwise, means the medical indemnity plan, the  
76 managed care plan option or the group life insurance plan offered by the agency.

77 (8) "Retired employee" means an employee of the state who retired after April 29, 1971,  
78 and an employee of the Higher Education Policy Commission, the Council for Community and  
79 Technical College Education, a state institution of higher education or a county board of education  
80 who retires on or after April 21, 1972, and all additional eligible employees who retire on or after  
81 the effective date of this article, meet the minimum eligibility requirements for their respective  
82 state retirement system and whose last employer immediately prior to retirement under the state  
83 retirement system is a participating employer in the state retirement system and in the Public  
84 Employees Insurance Agency: *Provided*, That for the purposes of this article, the employees  
85 who are not covered by a state retirement system, but who are covered by a state-approved or  
86 state-contracted retirement program or a system approved by the director, shall, in the case of  
87 education employees, meet the minimum eligibility requirements of the state Teachers Retirement  
88 System and in all other cases, meet the minimum eligibility requirements of the Public Employees  
89 Retirement System and may participate in the Public Employees Insurance Agency as retired  
90 employees upon terms as the director sets by rule as authorized in this article. Employers with

91 employees who are, or who are eligible to become, retired employees under this article shall be  
92 mandatory participants in the Retiree Health Benefit Trust Fund created pursuant to article  
93 sixteen-d of this chapter. Nonstate employers may opt out of the West Virginia other post-  
94 employment benefits plan of the Retiree Health Benefit Trust Fund and elect to not provide  
95 benefits under the Public Employees Insurance Agency to retirees of the nonstate employer, but  
96 may do so only upon the written certification, under oath, of an authorized officer of the employer  
97 that the employer has no employees who are, or who are eligible to become, retired employees  
98 and that the employer will defend and hold harmless the Public Employees Insurance Agency  
99 from any claim by one of the employer's past, present or future employees for eligibility to  
100 participate in the Public Employees Insurance Agency as a retired employee. As a matter of  
101 law, the Public Employees Insurance Agency shall not be liable in any respect to provide plan  
102 benefits to a retired employee of a nonstate employer which has opted out of the West Virginia  
103 other post-employment benefits plan of the Retiree Health Benefit Trust Fund pursuant to this  
104 section.

**§5-16-27. Premiums for volunteer firefighters.**

1 Notwithstanding any provision of this code to the contrary, the county commission in which  
2 a volunteer fire department is located shall pay either three-fourths or the full amount of premiums  
3 due to the Public Employees Insurance Agency for coverage of all volunteer firefighters in the  
4 county.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to include volunteer firefighters within the Public Employees Insurance Act and require the county commissions to pay either three-fourths or the full amount of premiums.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.