

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 567

By Senator Stuart

[Introduced February 06, 2023; referred
to the Committee on Pensions; and then to the
Committee on Finance]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §16-5V-2 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
2 to defining and amending terms related to a "participating public employer".

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5V. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES RETIREMENT SYSTEM ACT.

§16-5V-2. Definitions.

1 As used in this article, unless a federal law or regulation or the context clearly requires a
2 different meaning:

3 (a) "Accrued benefit" means on behalf of any member two and six 10ths percent per year
4 of the member's final average salary for the first 20 years of credited service. Additionally, two
5 percent per year for 21 through 25 years and one and one-half percent per year for each year over
6 25 years will be credited with a maximum benefit of 67 percent. A member's accrued benefit may
7 not exceed the limits of section 415 of the Internal Revenue Code and is subject to the provisions
8 of §16-5V-12 of this code.

9 (1) The board may, upon the recommendation of the board's actuary, increase the
10 employees' contribution rate to 10 and five-tenths percent should the funding of the plan not reach
11 70 percent funded by July 1, 2012. The board shall decrease the contribution rate to eight and one-
12 half percent once the plan funding reaches the 70 percent support objective as of any later
13 actuarial valuation date.

14 (2) Upon reaching the 75 percent actuarial funded level, as of an actuarial valuation date,
15 the board shall increase the two and six-tenths percent to two and three-quarter percent for the
16 first 20 years of credited service. The maximum benefit will also be increased from 67 percent to
17 90 percent.

18 (b) "Accumulated contributions" means the sum of all retirement contributions deducted
19 from the compensation of a member, or paid on his or her behalf as a result of covered
20 employment, together with regular interest on the deducted amounts.

21 (c) "Active military duty" means full-time active duty with any branch of the armed forces of
22 the United States, including service with the National Guard or reserve military forces when the
23 member has been called to active full-time duty and has received no compensation during the
24 period of that duty from any board or employer other than the armed forces.

25 (d) "Actuarial equivalent" means a benefit of equal value computed upon the basis of the
26 mortality table and interest rates as set and adopted by the board in accordance with the
27 provisions of this article.

28 (e) "Annual compensation" means the wages paid to the member during covered
29 employment within the meaning of section 3401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, but determined
30 without regard to any rules that limit the remuneration included in wages based upon the nature or
31 location of employment or services performed during the plan year plus amounts excluded under
32 section 414(h)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code and less reimbursements or other expense
33 allowances, cash or noncash fringe benefits or both, deferred compensation and welfare benefits.
34 Annual compensation for determining benefits during any determination period may not exceed
35 the maximum compensation allowed as adjusted for cost of living in accordance with §5-10D-7 of
36 this code and section 401(a)(17) of the Internal Revenue Code.

37 (f) "Annual leave service" means accrued annual leave.

38 (g) "Annuity starting date" means the first day of the month for which an annuity is payable
39 after submission of a retirement application. For purposes of this subsection, if retirement income
40 payments commence after the normal retirement age, "retirement" means the first day of the
41 month following or coincident with the latter of the last day the member worked in covered
42 employment or the member's normal retirement age and after completing proper written
43 application for retirement on an application supplied by the board.

44 (h) "Board" means the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.

45 (i) "Contributing service" or "contributory service" means service rendered by a member
46 while employed by a participating public employer for which the member made contributions to the
47 plan.

48 (j) "County commission or political subdivision" has the meaning ascribed to it in this code.

49 (k) "Covered employment" means either: (1) Employment as a full-time emergency
50 medical technician, emergency medical technician/paramedic or emergency medical
51 services/registered nurse and the active performance of the duties required of emergency medical
52 services officers; or (2) the period of time during which active duties are not performed but
53 disability benefits are received under this article; or (3) concurrent employment by an emergency
54 medical services officer in a job or jobs in addition to his or her employment as an emergency
55 medical services officer where the secondary employment requires the emergency medical
56 services officer to be a member of another retirement system which is administered by the
57 Consolidated Public Retirement Board pursuant to this code: *Provided*, That the emergency
58 medical services officer contributes to the fund created in this article the amount specified as the
59 member's contribution in §16-5V-8 of this code.

60 (l) "Credited service" means the sum of a member's years of service, active military duty,
61 disability service and accrued annual and sick leave service.

62 (m) "Dependent child" means either:

63 (1) An unmarried person under age 18 who is:

64 (A) A natural child of the member;

65 (B) A legally adopted child of the member;

66 (C) A child who at the time of the member's death was living with the member while the
67 member was an adopting parent during any period of probation; or

68 (D) A stepchild of the member residing in the member's household at the time of the
69 member's death; or

70 (2) Any unmarried child under age 23:

71 (A) Who is enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited college or university;

72 (B) Who was claimed as a dependent by the member for federal income tax purposes at
73 the time of the member's death; and

74 (C) Whose relationship with the member is described in paragraph (A), (B) or (C),
75 subdivision (1) of this subsection.

76 (n) "Dependent parent" means the father or mother of the member who was claimed as a
77 dependent by the member for federal income tax purposes at the time of the member's death.

78 (o) "Disability service" means service received by a member, expressed in whole years,
79 fractions thereof or both, equal to one half of the whole years, fractions thereof, or both, during
80 which time a member receives disability benefits under this article.

81 (p) "Early retirement age" means age 45 or over and completion of 20 years of contributory
82 service.

83 (q) "Effective date" means January 1, 2008.

84 (r) "Emergency medical services officer" means an individual employed by the state,
85 county or other political subdivision as a medical professional who is qualified to respond to
86 medical emergencies, aids the sick and injured and arranges or transports to medical facilities, as
87 defined by the West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services. This definition is construed to
88 include employed ambulance providers and other services such as law enforcement, rescue or
89 fire department personnel who primarily perform these functions and are not provided any other
90 credited service benefits or retirement plans. These persons may hold the rank of emergency
91 medical technician/basic, emergency medical technician/paramedic, emergency medical
92 services/registered nurse, or others as defined by the West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical
93 Services and the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.

94 (s) "Employer error" means an omission, misrepresentation or deliberate act in violation of
95 relevant provisions of the West Virginia Code or of the West Virginia Code of State Rules or the
96 relevant provisions of both the West Virginia Code and of the West Virginia Code of State Rules by

97 the participating public employer that has resulted in an underpayment or overpayment of
98 contributions required.

99 (t) "Final average salary" means the average of the highest annual compensation received
100 for covered employment by the member during any five consecutive plan years within the
101 member's last 10 years of service while employed, prior to any disability payment. If the member
102 did not have annual compensation for the five full plan years preceding the member's attainment
103 of normal retirement age and during that period the member received disability benefits under this
104 article, then "final average salary" means the average of the monthly salary determined paid to the
105 member during that period as determined under §16-5V-19 of this code multiplied by 12. Final
106 average salary does not include any lump sum payment for unused, accrued leave of any kind or
107 character.

108 (u) "Full-time employment" means permanent employment of an employee by a
109 participating public employer in a position which normally requires 12 months per year service and
110 requires at least 1040 hours per year service in that position.

111 (v) "Fund" means the West Virginia Emergency Medical Services Retirement Fund created
112 by this article.

113 (w) "Hour of service" means:

114 (1) Each hour for which a member is paid or entitled to payment for covered employment
115 during which time active duties are performed. These hours shall be credited to the member for the
116 plan year in which the duties are performed; and

117 (2) Each hour for which a member is paid or entitled to payment for covered employment
118 during a plan year but where no duties are performed due to vacation, holiday, illness, incapacity
119 including disability, layoff, jury duty, military duty, leave of absence or any combination thereof and
120 without regard to whether the employment relationship has terminated. Hours under this
121 subdivision shall be calculated and credited pursuant to West Virginia Division of Labor rules. A

122 member will not be credited with any hours of service for any period of time he or she is receiving
123 benefits under §16-5V-19 or §16-5V-20 of this code; and

124 (3) Each hour for which back pay is either awarded or agreed to be paid by the employing
125 county commission or political subdivision, irrespective of mitigation of damages. The same hours
126 of service shall not be credited both under subdivision (1) or (2) of this subsection and under this
127 subdivision. Hours under this paragraph shall be credited to the member for the plan year or years
128 to which the award or agreement pertains, rather than the plan year in which the award,
129 agreement or payment is made.

130 (x) "Member" means a person first hired as an emergency medical services officer by an
131 employer which is a participating public employer of the Public Employees Retirement System or
132 the Emergency Medical Services Retirement System after the effective date of this article, as
133 defined in subsection (q) of this section, or an emergency medical services officer of an employer
134 which is a participating public employer of the Public Employees Retirement System first hired
135 prior to the effective date and who elects to become a member pursuant to this article. A member
136 shall remain a member until the benefits to which he or she is entitled under this article are paid or
137 forfeited.

138 (y) "Monthly salary" means the W-2 reportable compensation received by a member during
139 the month.

140 (z) "Normal form" means a monthly annuity which is one twelfth of the amount of the
141 member's accrued benefit which is payable for the member's life. If the member dies before the
142 sum of the payments he or she receives equals his or her accumulated contributions on the
143 annuity starting date, the named beneficiary shall receive in one lump sum the difference between
144 the accumulated contributions at the annuity starting date and the total of the retirement income
145 payments made to the member.

146 (aa) "Normal retirement age" means the first to occur of the following:

147 (1) Attainment of age 50 years and the completion of 20 or more years of regular
148 contributory service, excluding active military duty, disability service and accrued annual and sick
149 leave service;

150 (2) While still in covered employment, attainment of at least age 50 years and when the
151 sum of current age plus regular contributory years of service equals or exceeds 70 years;

152 (3) While still in covered employment, attainment of at least age 60 years and completion
153 of 10 years of regular contributory service; or

154 (4) Attainment of age 62 years and completion of five or more years of regular contributory
155 service.

156 (bb) "Participating public employer" means any county commission, ~~or~~ political
157 subdivision, or any emergency medical services agency licensed under §16-4C-6a of this code
158 that is designated by a county commission to provide emergency response through a county
159 emergency dispatch center in the state which has elected to cover its emergency medical services
160 officers, as defined in this article, under the West Virginia Emergency Medical Services Retirement
161 System.

162 (cc) "Plan" means the West Virginia Emergency Medical Services Retirement System
163 established by this article.

164 (dd) "Plan year" means the 12-month period commencing on January 1 of any designated
165 year and ending the following December 31.

166 (ee) "Political subdivision" means a county, city or town in the state; any separate
167 corporation or instrumentality established by one or more counties, cities or towns, as permitted by
168 law; any corporation or instrumentality supported in most part by counties, cities or towns; and any
169 public corporation charged by law with the performance of a governmental function and whose
170 jurisdiction is coextensive with one or more counties, cities or towns: *Provided*, That any public
171 corporation established under §7-15-4 of this code is considered a political subdivision solely for
172 the purposes of this article.

173 (ff) "Public Employees Retirement System" means the West Virginia Public Employee's
174 Retirement System created by West Virginia Code.

175 (gg) "Regular interest" means the rate or rates of interest per annum, compounded
176 annually, as the board adopts in accordance with the provisions of this article.

177 (hh) "Required beginning date" means April 1 of the calendar year following the later of: (1)
178 The calendar year in which the member attains age 70.5 (if born before July 1, 1949) or age 72 (if
179 born after June 30, 1949); or (2) the calendar year in which he or she retires or otherwise
180 separates from covered employment.

181 (ii) "Retirant" means any member who commences an annuity payable by the plan.

182 (jj) "Retire" or "retirement" means a member's withdrawal from the employ of a
183 participating public employer and the commencement of an annuity by the plan.

184 (kk) "Retirement income payments" means the monthly retirement income payments
185 payable under the plan.

186 (ll) "Spouse" means the person to whom the member is legally married on the annuity
187 starting date.

188 (mm) "Surviving spouse" means the person to whom the member was legally married at
189 the time of the member's death and who survived the member.

190 (nn) "Totally disabled" means a member's inability to engage in substantial gainful activity
191 by reason of any medically determined physical or mental impairment that can be expected to
192 result in death or that has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than
193 12 months.

194 For purposes of this subsection:

195 (1) A member is totally disabled only if his or her physical or mental impairment or
196 impairments is so severe that he or she is not only unable to perform his or her previous work as an
197 emergency medical services officer but also cannot, considering his or her age, education and
198 work experience, engage in any other kind of substantial gainful employment which exists in the

199 state regardless of whether: (A) The work exists in the immediate area in which the member lives;
 200 (B) a specific job vacancy exists; or (C) the member would be hired if he or she applied for work.
 201 For purposes of this article, substantial gainful employment is the same definition as used by the
 202 United States Social Security Administration.

203 (2) "Physical or mental impairment" is an impairment that results from an anatomical,
 204 physiological or psychological abnormality that is demonstrated by medically accepted clinical and
 205 laboratory diagnostic techniques. The board may require submission of a member's annual tax
 206 return for purposes of monitoring the earnings limitation.

207 (oo) "Year of service" means a member shall, except in his or her first and last years of
 208 covered employment, be credited with years of service credit based upon the hours of service
 209 performed as covered employment and credited to the member during the plan year based upon
 210 the following schedule:

211

Hours of Service	Years of Service Credited
Less than 500	0
500 to 999	1/3
1000 to 1499	2/3
1500 or more	1

212

213 During a member's first and last years of covered employment, the member shall be
 214 credited with one twelfth of a year of service for each month during the plan year in which the
 215 member is credited with an hour of service for which contributions were received by the fund. A
 216 member is not entitled to credit for years of service for any time period during which he or she
 217 received disability payments under §16-5V-19 or §16-5V-20 of this code. Except as specifically
 218 excluded, years of service include covered employment prior to the effective date.

219 Years of service which are credited to a member prior to his or her receipt of accumulated
 220 contributions upon termination of employment pursuant to §16-5V-18 of this code or §5-10-30 of
 221 this code, shall be disregarded for all purposes under this plan unless the member repays the

- 222 accumulated contributions with interest pursuant to section §16-5V-18 of this code or has prior to
- 223 the effective date made the repayment pursuant to §5-10-18 of this code.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to define and amend terms related to a participating public employer.

West Virginia Code §16-5V-2 was amended by two bills passed during the 2022 Regular Session of the Legislature, by the House. House Bill 4688 (passed last on March 12, 2022); House Bill 4540 (passed first on March 10, 2022). The two versions of this section have been merged into this bill.

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