

**HB 2196 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

**Senate Committee On Workforce**

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**Meeting Dates:** 4/25

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Designates employees of the Oregon Military Department (OMD) whose primary duty is fighting structural, aircraft, wildland, or other fires as eligible for participation in Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) as a firefighter. Applies to former, current, and future OMD employees.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

**EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

No amendment.

**BACKGROUND:**

Under current law, certain public employees whose primary duties are fighting fires qualify as members of the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). In the PERS system, workers legally classified as firefighters accrue pensions at a higher rate and qualify for full retirement five years earlier than general service employees. Workers classified as firefighters include fire marshals as well as employees of the Oregon Department of Forestry certified by the State Forester as professional wildland firefighters.

The Oregon Military Department (OMD) currently employs 47 people whose primary duty is to fight fires and who work on airbases in Portland and Klamath Falls. Current law does not include these employees as members of PERS. Since 1989, however, the Oregon Military Department (OMD) mis-classified such persons as PERS members resulting in OMD making PERS contributions and erroneously communicating to employees that they could receive PERS benefits.

House Bill 2196-A clarifies that employees of the Oregon Military Department whose primary duty is fighting structural, aircraft, wildland, or other fires are eligible for participation in PERS. House Bill 2196-A also clarifies that employees whose service was erroneously reported to PERS as a firefighter shall be deemed firefighters for PERS purposes provided OMD made the required contributions. And any firefighting employees OMD reported as general service will be converted to firefighters for PERS purposes.