



# OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters  
AFL-CIO CLC

House Committee on Emergency Management,  
General Government and Veterans

Chair Representative Dacia Grayber  
Vice Chair Rick Lewis  
Vice Chair Thuy Tran

Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Tran and Lewis,

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council and we represent 3700 career fire fighters nad paramedics throughout the great State of Oregon.

I am here to testify in favor of House Bill 2722 -2. The Police and Fire Military Retirement Bill this session. As you have heard me testify before on our employment crisis, pending retirements and starting from a deficit of fire fighters and police officers serving our communities, public safety organizations in Oregon have serious work to do.

HB 2722-2 adds three years of retirement credit for those Police and Fire PERS veterans of military service. This 3 -year addition is for those members who were hired under 238A, OPSRP and completed at least 3 years in the military to receive this retirement credit.

Public Safety in Oregon is a unique employment sector. Most of what we do as a everyday duty most would never a consider a career in public safety an occupational option. Whether a Correction Officer, firefighter, paramedic, or police officer constant staffing means there are undesirable shifts that need to be filled every single day. Unprecedented overtime to keep the apparatus responding to an increasing call volume means the stresses of being a public safety professional is difficult. I think it is important that we respond in one way or another to every call for service. Pre-pandemic, during and after the pandemic portion was over. We never close, less is never more and this creates another challenge for us as public safety professionals, we don't say no when someone needs our help.

Our employment challenge is to find that balance between attracting the right people and the bigger challenge of keeping them. Once a person has served their country in one of the armed forces very few would deny the nobility and sacrifice of serving our country. It is time we; State Government enhance retirement benefits for our public safety professionals. We are asking that this small subgroup of employees receive 3 additional years of retirement service credit once eligible for retirement. This additional retirement credit creates an incentive for staying in a qualifying public safety career.



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We are finding out through our recruitment process that prospective employees are not just looking inside Oregon for willful employment they are going to the State Washington for a larger public safety multiplier for all members of their retirement system and we need to improve our retirement system to stay competitive.

This modest pension improvement recognizes the commitment and service to our country made by our veterans, both current and prospective.

The data suggests this worker shortage will continue some ten to twelve years, eleven million jobs country wide and only 5 million workers to fill them, something must move. This is a multi-faceted problem that requires our attention and diligence to one of the most essential of all government services, public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. If the Committee has any questions, I am willing to answer them.

Regards

*Karl Koenig* s/s

Karl Koenig  
President  
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council