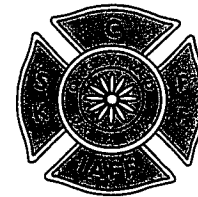


"PROGRESS THROUGH UNITY"



KANSAS STATE COUNCIL OF FIRE FIGHTERS



Affiliated With

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS • KANSAS AFL-CIO • CENTRAL LABOR BODIES

Testimony of Robert S. Wing

Re: House Bill No. 2352

My name is Robert S. Wing. I am a captain in the Fire Department of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas. I am also Business Manager of the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 64 and President of the Kansas State Council of Fire Fighters. I appear here today to speak in support of House Bill No. 2352.

The intent of this bill is to amend the Kansas Police and Firemen's Retirement System so as to replace the current 80 percent cap on pensions earned under this system with a cap of 90 percent. Under the KP&F Retirement System, participants earn a benefit equal to 2.5 percent of the participants final average salary multiplied by the number of years credited service. However, the current statute states that the retirement benefit cannot exceed 80 percent of such member's final average salary. Thus, police of fire fighters with more than 32 years of service accrue no additional benefit.

The employees that I represent believe that this leads to the early retirement of some of our most skilled and experienced employees. The experience gained by seasoned police and fire fighters is invaluable in providing the leadership regarding the services that our communities both deserve and expect. Many of our fire fighters retire upon attainment of the 80 percent retirement maximum. However, in some cases, these employees are still at working age and simply embark on another career. Thus, skilled fire fighters and police employees are lost to our communities because of the 80 percent cap.

Currently, there are only two retirement systems in our State with a cap, the KP&F and the Judicial Retirement System. KPERS, which covers the vast majority of public employees in Kansas, has no benefit cap. Long serving employees covered under KPERS continue to accrue retirement benefits for each year that they continue to work. Under the KP&F, police or fire fighters who work beyond 32 years serving their communities accrue no additional retirement benefits. Further, although the 7 percent employee contribution is reduced to 2 percent of wages after attainment of the 80 percent retirement benefit, that is 2 percent of wages being contributed for which no benefit is gained. It is important to note that the employer contribution rate does not cease and is not reduced until an employee retires.

I am not an actuary. However, it is my understanding that the proposed increased employee contribution from 7 percent to 7.15 percent makes the proposed benefit increase cost neutral. In the proposed legislation there will be no increase in contributions by the

affected employee's employer. The police and fire fighters are paying the cost of the proposed change in benefit structure in its entirety.

In summary, the women and men in the fire service that I represent work hard to serve their communities. There is much to be learned on our jobs and experience is our most important asset. We need to reward our most seasoned employees who choose to remain in their chosen career to train those junior officers that come behind them. We believe the proposed legislation does just that and respectfully request the committees' full support of H.B. 2352.

I will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have and thank all involved for their efforts in bringing this issue before you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. S. Wing', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Robert S. Wing

President, Kansas State Council of Fire Fighters

Business Manager, IAFF Local 64