



Rules for State Elected Officials

The following rules apply to state elected officials who choose to be covered by the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) Plan 1 while in office. You are eligible to participate in PERS Plan 1 while in office if:

- You were elected to statewide office (including election to the state legislature); and
- You are a PERS Plan 1 member when elected to office, or
- You are a former PERS Plan 1 member (even if you withdrew funds from your retirement account).

You are not required to join PERS membership while serving in your elected position. However, if you would like to become a member while in office, you must apply to the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS).

When can I apply for membership?

You may apply for membership at any time during your current term of office. If you enter membership after your current term of office has begun, membership will be retroactive to the first day of your current term of office. You will be required to pay employee contributions plus interest back to the first day of your term.

Your membership decision is final: Once you have established retirement system membership, you must remain a member until you separate from all eligible public employment. If you serve an additional term of office with the same employer without a break in service, you will remain a retirement system member until you terminate employment.

If you separate from service and leave office, you will not be considered separated if you return to office for the same employer during the term in which you left.

Can I receive credit for past elected service?

When you have established membership for your current term, you may have the option of purchasing service credit for any previous term or terms of office during which you did not choose to apply for membership. Membership will be granted retroactively to the beginning of your elected service.

To receive service credit for any previous term or terms of elected service, you must pay the required employee and employer contributions and interest, as determined by DRS. Your employer may elect to pay the required employer contributions and interest for you.

All prior consecutive service must be purchased. If you have served multiple terms in office with different employers, you may purchase credit for service with each employer independently.

If you do not choose to become a member while holding elected office, and later become an active PERS 1 member in a non-elected position, you may then purchase credit for your elected service.



How much service credit will I earn?

The amount of service credit you earn helps to determine the size of your retirement benefit. As a state elected official, you:

- Earn one month of service credit for each month during which you earn compensation in your elected position.
- Can earn no more than one service credit month in any calendar month even if you are employed with another PERS-covered employer.

Service in any state elected position is considered full-time service. For example, if you serve a full year as a legislator you will receive a full year of service credit regardless of the number of hours you worked in any month. If you resign prior to the end of your term you will earn service credit for each month in which you received compensation.

What will my retirement benefit be?

The portion of your benefit based on your legislative service will be calculated according to the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned} & 3 \text{ percent} \times \text{service credit years} \times \\ & \text{Average Final Compensation (AFC)} = \\ & \text{Monthly benefit} \end{aligned}$$

Your non-legislative service will be calculated according to the formula:

$$\begin{aligned} & 2 \text{ percent} \times \text{service credit years} \times \text{AFC} = \\ & \text{Monthly benefit} \end{aligned}$$

Average Final Compensation is the monthly average of your 24 consecutive highest-paid service credit months

The retirement benefits of most PERS 1 members are limited to 60 percent of AFC. However, this limit does not apply to your years of service as a state elected official.

Legislative service: If you are a PERS Plan 1 legislator on a leave of absence from a PERS position for the purpose of serving in the state legislature, your total earnings may include the salary you would have received in the position you left, if your employee and employer contributions are paid.

How much will I contribute to my retirement plan?

You will contribute 7.5 percent of your salary each month to your retirement plan.

Can I retire and retain my elected position?

You may retire during your term of office and continue serving in your elected position, if:

- In that position, you earn less than \$22,355 (as of 2006) adjusted annually for inflation, and
- You abandon claims for credit for future periods of elected service.

If you were a state elected official from 1967 through 1973, you may be entitled to retire and retain your position until your term ends.



What if I am a retired PERS Plan 1 member when elected?

If you are a retired PERS Plan 1 member when elected to office, you can choose to either remain retired and continue receiving your retirement benefit without interruption while serving in office, or return to active member status while serving in office.

If you return to active member status, you will stop receiving a monthly retirement benefit, and you will resume making contributions to your retirement system and accumulating service credit prospectively from the first day of the month following the date the department accepts your application for membership.

How do I enroll?

To begin, continue or re-establish PERS 1 membership, contact DRS and provide the following information:

- Name
- Social Security number
- Address and phone number
- Position title and employer
- Beginning and ending dates of all elected official service

DRS will send you a letter and application once you provide us with all of these items.

To Learn More

More information about Elected Officials is available on the DRS Web site or by contacting DRS. Additional rules governing all PERS Plan 1 members are summarized in the *PERS Plan 1 Member Handbook*. To obtain a copy of a member handbook, visit the DRS Web site at www.drs.wa.gov or contact DRS.

Web site: www.drs.wa.gov

Telephone: 1-800-547-6657; or (360) 664-7000 in the Olympia area
TDD: 1-866-377-8895; or (360) 586-5450 in the Olympia area

E-mail: recep@drs.wa.gov

Address: P.O. Box 48380
Olympia WA 98504-8380

May 2008

Summary Description

The provisions governing Elected Officials are contained in the Revised Code of Washington. This publication is a summary of those provisions, not a complete description of the law. If there are any conflicts between what is written in this publication and what is contained in the law, the applicable law will govern.