



## Work Session 3

# *Disaster Response Coverage*

### *Issue*

LEOFF Plan 2 members who are called up to federal service to respond to natural disasters receive reduced non-duty death and disability benefits from LEOFF Plan 2 if they are killed or disabled in the course of that service.

### *Background*

A number of LEOFF Plan 2 members were recently called into federal service with the National Guard, Military Reserves and the National Disaster Medical System to respond to natural disasters such as the Oso mudslide and the Chelan wildfires. A LEOFF Plan 2 member called into federal service is classified as “on-leave” from their employer.

The LEOFF Plan 2 Board and the Select Committee on Pension Policy previously recommended joint legislation to provide some pension benefit protections to members on leave for federal service in the military during a time of war:

1. A 2005 bill permitted survivors of members of all plans to purchase up to 5 years of military service credit if the member died while in the uniformed services. This bill had no effect on contribution rates.
2. A 2009 bill provided an unreduced survivor annuity to qualifying survivors of members of all systems and plans who leave public employment due to service in the National Guard or Military Reserves and die while honorably serving during a period of war. This bill had no effect on contribution rates.

\*Neither of these bills provided the lump sum duty death benefit or the catastrophic duty disability benefit.

### *Strategic Questions*

- (1) Should deaths and injuries that occur while providing public service in response to natural disasters be considered non-duty with respect to a member’s LEOFF Plan 2 pension if that service was performed for a federal agency?
- (2) Are limited pension protections such as those previously provided for military service appropriate for this kind of federal service?
- (3) Does it matter whether the federal service is provided in response to a disaster in Washington or in another state?