

SUBJECT: Continued retirement benefits for teachers returning to teach in shortage areas

COMMITTEE: Pensions and Investments — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Greenberg, Tillery, Clark, George, Rangel, Williams

0 nays

3 absent — Bonnen, Salinas, Telford

WITNESSES: For —Mike Lehr, Texas Retired Teachers Association

Against —None

On —Michael Carter, Ronnie Jung, Charles Dunlap, Teacher Retirement System of Texas

BACKGROUND: Under current law, a retired teacher may not return to work as a full-time teacher and continue to draw retirement benefits from the Teachers Retirement System. Exceptions are made for retired teachers to teach as substitutes or to work part time.

DIGEST: CSHB 1702 would add an exemption allowing a retired teacher to return to full-time teaching without a loss of retirement benefits, provided the teacher:

- ! was teaching in an “acute shortage area” as defined by the education commissioner;
- ! was properly certified in the subjects assigned under the Education Code;
- ! had been retired from service with all public schools for at least 12 months; and
- ! had not taken early retirement.

The bill would apply beginning with the 1999-2000 school year and would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 1702 would increase the supply of certified teachers to meet a growing need for experienced teachers in shortage areas. Last year, more than one out of five teachers were teaching subjects they were not certified to teach. Shortages were especially acute in math, science, bilingual education, special education, and computer science. Students need a solid grounding in math, science, and computer science to compete for the best-paying jobs in the Texas economy. Texas needs a workforce trained in these skills to attract cutting edge industries. The state cannot wait until more new teachers are trained. Worse yet, approximately 19,000 classroom teachers are expected to leave the profession this year, making current shortages even more acute.

Qualified retired teachers who are still interested in contributing to education, children, and the future of Texas would have an incentive to do so if they could earn a paycheck, yet keep their retirement benefits. This would help Texas school children, bringing much needed experience back to the classroom.

While the retired teacher would not contribute to the TRS, there is no negative fiscal impact predicted. There also is no negative impact in the TRS Unfunded Accrued Actuarial Analysis.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Retired teachers should not receive double incomes. If anything, retired teachers returning to the profession should receive adjusted compensation. If retired teachers are collecting double compensation, the morale of current teachers would suffer. They would receive a total compensation package that is less than what the retired teachers receive.

More effort should be made to increase the salaries of current teachers, with higher salaries and increased benefits for certified teachers in shortage areas. Increased pay for today's teachers would address the long-term shortage problems, as well as the loss of math and computer science teachers to private industry. This is a stop-gap measure, not a long-term solution.

**NOTES:**

The committee substitute added that the teacher must not have taken early retirement and must not have taught in public schools for at least 12 months.