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INTRODUCED

HB2581

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4 **HOUSE BILL NO. 2581**
5 Offered January 13, 2025
6 Prefiled January 13, 2025
7 *A BILL to amend and reenact § 51.1-138 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Virginia Retirement System;*
8 *enhanced retirement benefits for 911 dispatchers, animal control officers, and municipal park rangers.*

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10 Patrons—Cordaiza, Ennis and Green
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12 Referred to Committee on Appropriations
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15 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

16 **1. That § 51.1-138 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

17 **§ 51.1-138. Benefits.**

18 A. Employees who become members under this article and on whose behalf contributions are paid as
19 provided in this article shall be entitled to benefits under the retirement system.

20 B. By resolution legally adopted and approved by the Board, the employer may elect to provide benefits
21 equivalent to those provided under the State Police Officers' Retirement System, as set out in Chapter 2 (§
22 51.1-200 et seq.) ~~of this title~~ except for § 51.1-209, and except that the employer may elect to establish the
23 retirement allowance pursuant to the allowance provided in clause (i) or (ii) in subsection A of § 51.1-206, in
24 lieu of the benefits that would otherwise be provided hereunder for any employees who are employed in (i)
25 law-enforcement positions comparably hazardous to that of a state police officer, including any sworn
26 law-enforcement officer who has the duty and obligation to enforce the penal and traffic laws of this
27 Commonwealth as directed by his superior officer, if so certified by his appointing authority; (ii) positions as
28 full-time salaried ~~fire fighters, firefighters~~; (iii) positions as full-time salaried emergency medical technicians;
29 ~~or~~; (iv) positions as regional jail superintendents and jail officers of regional jail farms, regional jails, or jail
30 authorities, as approved by the respective jail board or authority and by the participating political
31 subdivisions of such entities; (v) *positions as full-time salaried dispatchers for a public safety answering*
32 *point as defined in § 56-484.12; (vi) positions as full-time animal control officers, as that term is defined in §*
33 *3.2-6500; or (vii) positions as sworn municipal park rangers who have completed all requirements under §*
34 *15.2-1706 and therefore qualify as conservators of the peace pursuant to § 19.2-12.* Sheriffs of political
35 subdivisions and superintendents of regional jails ~~which~~ that participate in the retirement system shall receive
36 benefits equivalent to those of state police officers, except for the benefits provided under § 51.1-209,
37 regardless of whether the employer has elected to provide equivalent benefits as set out in this subsection.

38 C. Each employer providing the benefits of subsection B for its employees prior to July 1, 1990, may elect
39 to provide for the early retirement of employees as set forth in this subsection in lieu of the early retirement
40 and death before retirement provisions of the State Police Officers' Retirement System. Such election must be
41 made to the Board in writing prior to July 1, 1990. Any member in service on or after his fifty-fifth birthday
42 with five or more years of creditable service (i) while earning the benefits permitted by this section, (ii) as a
43 member in the retirement system established by Chapter 2 (§ 51.1-200 et seq.) ~~of this title~~, or (iii) as a
44 member in the retirement system established by Chapter 2.1 (§ 51.1-211 et seq.) ~~of this title~~ may retire upon
45 written notification to the Board setting forth at what time the retirement is to become effective. The effective
46 date shall be after his last day of service but shall not be more than 90 days prior to the filing of such notice.
47 The member shall receive an allowance that shall be determined in the same manner as for retirement at an
48 employee's normal retirement with creditable service and average final compensation being determined as of
49 the date of his actual retirement. If the member has less than 30 years of service at retirement, the amount of
50 the retirement allowance shall be reduced on an actuarial equivalent basis for the period by which the actual
51 retirement date precedes the earlier of (a) the member's normal retirement date or (b) the first date on or after
52 the member's fifty-fifth birthday on which the member would have completed a total of 30 years of creditable
53 service. Effective December 31, 2003, any employee in service on June 30, 2002, and July 1, 2002, who is
54 credited with five or more years of creditable service rendered under this chapter and earning the benefits
55 permitted by this section, Chapter 2 (§ 51.1-200 et seq.), or Chapter 2.1 (§ 51.1-211 et seq.) ~~of this title~~ shall
56 not be subject to the vesting requirements of this section, and §§ 51.1-205 and 51.1-216.

57 Members retiring under the provisions of this subsection shall be entitled to receive post-retirement
58 supplements as provided in § 51.1-166. In computing the amount of any supplement, any additional
59 allowances being paid under the provisions of subsection B of § 51.1-206 shall be disregarded. In the case of
60 death before retirement, members whose employers elect to provide benefits in accordance with the
61 provisions of this subsection and who have not attained the age of 50 on the date of death shall be assumed to
62 be 50 years of age for the purposes of reducing the benefits on an actuarial equivalent basis.

63 D. Beginning July 1, 2008, each county and city participating in the Virginia Retirement System shall

59 provide the benefit coverage described in subsection B to each deputy sheriff, regardless of whether the
60 deputy sheriff's salary is funded or reimbursed in whole or in part by the Compensation Board.

61 E. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection C, beginning July 1, 2009, the City of Danville shall
62 provide to each deputy sheriff the benefit coverage described in subsection B.

63 F. Beginning July 1, 2009, each regional jail board and regional jail authority participating in the Virginia
64 Retirement System and each county and city participating in such board or authority shall provide the benefit
65 coverage described in subsection B to each sworn officer of a regional jail, regardless of whether the regional
66 jail officer's salary is funded or reimbursed in whole or in part by the State Compensation Board.

67 G. Beginning July 1, 2010, any county or city that (i) participates in the Virginia Retirement System
68 pursuant to Chapter 1 (§ 51.1-124.1 et seq.), (ii) has in effect a retirement supplement for deputy sheriffs (in
69 addition to the annual retirement allowance provided under the Virginia Retirement System) that exceeds the
70 allowance set forth in subsection B of § 51.1-206 hereof, and (iii) provides the same level of retirement
71 benefits to all of its deputy sheriffs, may, by resolution legally adopted, elect to provide the benefits coverage
72 under subsection B hereof except for the allowance described in subsection B of § 51.1-206. Notwithstanding
73 any other provision of law, the additional costs of such election shall be borne solely by such county or city.

74 H. If an employee (i) is in a position covered by the additional benefits under this section for at least five
75 years, (ii) is separated from the position because of a disability that entitles him to the disability retirement
76 benefits pursuant to § 51.1-156, and (iii) accepts a position with the same employer that is not covered by the
77 benefits under this section but whose salary and benefits are not less than those of the position from which he
78 is separated, then, at the sole discretion of the employer, the employee may continue to be covered under the
79 benefits permitted by this section in his new position.

80 I. The retirement system shall not be liable for the payment of any retirement allowances or other benefits
81 on behalf of a member or beneficiary of a member for which reserves have not been previously created from
82 funds contributed by the employer or the members for such benefits.

83 **2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective on July 1, 2026.**

84 **3. That the provisions of this act providing enhanced retirement benefits to employees who are
85 employed in positions as (i) full-time salaried dispatchers for a public safety answering point, as
86 defined in § 56-484.12 of the Code of Virginia; (ii) full-time animal control officers, as defined in §
87 3.2-6500 of the Code of Virginia; or (iii) sworn municipal park rangers who have completed all
88 requirements to qualify as conservators of the peace, pursuant to § 19.2-12 of the Code of Virginia,
89 shall apply only to service earned in such positions on or after July 1, 2026. An employer, as that term
90 is defined in § 51.1-124.3 of the Code of Virginia, may, in its discretion, provide such enhanced
91 retirement benefits to employees who are employed in positions as (a) full-time salaried dispatchers for
92 a public safety answering point, as defined in § 56-484.12 of the Code of Virginia; (b) full-time animal
93 control officers, as defined in § 3.2-6500 of the Code of Virginia; or (c) sworn municipal park rangers
94 who have completed all requirements to qualify as conservators of the peace, pursuant to § 19.2-12 of
95 the Code of Virginia, for service earned before July 1, 2026, in addition to service earned on or after
96 that date.**