



1108 S. BROADWAY  
LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS 66048  
(913) 912-3459

## JEFF PITTMAN

Feb 16, 2021

Chairman Longbine and esteemed members of Senate Financial Institutions & Insurance committee--

Thank you for making the time to have this hearing on SB135. I stand before you as a proponent of an idea that has been proposed many times over the past decades, studied in interims, proposed in floor amendments to KPERs bills... and an idea whose time is finally here. Quite simply, this bill gives the option to Corrections Officers to participate in the Kansas Police & Firefighter retirement fund.

The Kansas Department of Corrections was hit hard the last 15 years by extreme budget cuts. Workers were habitually tasked to work extreme overtime conditions on a skeletal staff, officers didn't receive pay increases for years, and the state was forced to reduce the age limit for officers to 18 just to attract new hires for this challenging, low-pay work. Our state corrections officers perform a valuable function in the justice system. These are demanding jobs that put our employees at risk, put strain on families, and require our workers to go as unsung heroes in a prison system that often operates at or above capacity.

As I stood on the House floor last session arguing for the need to give death benefits to families of Corrections workers who die with COVID in the line of duty, it became very apparent we need to do more for our corrections workers. We need to continue to work with them short term to keep them protected during this pandemic. But in the long term, this bill provides a more attractive retirement plan and will be an important tool for recruitment and retention. I have many corrections workers in my district, and they understand the value of having consistency of workforce when it comes to safety and security. They know what it means to be in constant state of awareness as they work with some of the most dangerous criminals in Kansas. They know what it means to get off the job and still be wary for their own safety and that of their families. We have the bandwidth; we need to do this now and stop year after year of studies and kicking this can down the road.

KPERs members have a 6% employee contribution rate and the employer contributes the State/School rate (14.41% in FY 2019) According to Legislative Research and the KPERs board, KP&F is similar to KPERs in basic plan design structure, but many of the plan design elements are different. The final average salary is calculated differently, and the multiplier is 2.5 percent instead of 1.85 percent. The vesting requirement is 15 years of service. Full KP&F retirement is at age 50 with 25 years of service, age 55 with 20 years of service, or age 60 with 15 years of service. Employee contributions are slightly higher in KP&F at 7.15%. The employer contribution rate is the full actuarial rate (20.56% in FY 2019). **As an example**, an Officer making 40,000 after 30 years of service would have \$30k in benefits per year versus \$22,200 in the current KPERs formula.



1108 S. BROADWAY  
LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS 66048  
(913) 912-3459

## JEFF PITTMAN

Some considerations: Since introducing this bill, I have had conversations with those affected. I believe, if we move forward on this, we need to figure out how to best transition those “stuck in the middle” between plans. I think we need to ensure those about to retire with say 6 years of service, could retire prior to vesting 15 years in their current KPERs plan. We may want to allow them explicitly to choose between the KPERs and KP&F plan. I also fully realize there are other uniformed services that may well wish to participate in KP&F as well. This does not exclude them nor does it “open the door”. It allows Corrections Officers this opportunity on their own merits with no need to include or exclude those other groups.

As a reference, there is another version in the House, HB 20xx, that does the same thing except it puts the burden of the extra payment on the employee. SB135 picks up this burden where previous estimates from the KPERs board put this amount as approximately \$5 Million out of state funds. This bill is nearly identical to a similar bill in 2018 proposed by Representative Jennings, [http://www.kslegislature.org/li\\_2018/b2017\\_18/measures/hb2448/](http://www.kslegislature.org/li_2018/b2017_18/measures/hb2448/).

In conclusion, there pages and pages of historic testimony in support of this concept throughout the years. Compelling stories, stories of what it’s like being a Corrections officer. Stories of riots, attacks, week after week of 80 hour work weeks. I urge this committee to take this idea up this session and take action. Our workers deserve it. If you don’t believe me, try doing their jobs for just one or two days. You will then understand that they are indeed law enforcement and worth of entry into this KP&F plan.

Senator Jeff Pittman

Leavenworth, KS SD 5