

Hawbaker, Lisa

From: SYGolondrina@aol.com
Sent: Friday, December 4, 2015 12:06 PM
To: Office State Actuary, WA
Cc: Gutierrez, Aaron
Subject: SB5873

December 4, 2015

To the Select Committee on Pension Policy

Re: ESB5873

Dear SCPP Members,

My name is Sonja Ericson, I am a stakeholder in this bill and I'm asking for your support. I was very encouraged and grateful the last legislative session by the overwhelming support of the Senate where it passed unanimously. As you know, it died in Committee in the House. Of course the budget was the priority and I presume timing was an issue. Also, the perception seemed to be that the amendment created a cost to the bill. In researching the information on the legislative website, I found that to be incorrect. I respectfully submit that the Actuarial Reports (both before and after the amendment) say the administrative cost to DRS would be \$41,561 with no fiscal impact. The cost applies to the bill with or without the amendment. I'd like to add that the amendment stipulates that every administrative option must be exhausted by the cut off date of March 1, 2015. I have fulfilled those requirements through the appeal process and also in Superior Court.

My husband Dennis Russell retired from King County Sheriff's Department. We were married after he retired. A few years later when he tried to name me as his beneficiary we learned the recently enacted law required that he must be receiving his full benefit. He was not, because his divorce decree gave his ex wife a portion of his retirement. The law changed again in 2005 which gave him the opportunity to name me, but his time we did not get the letter from DRS. Dennis certainly would have acted on this had he known. In 2006 he was diagnosed with a brain tumor and passed away in 2009 after a three year courageous battle against cancer. I took care of him, at home, until the end. We had been together for over 20 years. When I called DRS to tell them of his passing, they informed me of our missed opportunity and gave me instructions on the appeal process which took considerable effort... and money I did not have to spare. After about 2 years, the process came to an end and I was denied. I was stunned by the unfairness of the decision so I decided to take it to Superior Court. I felt that there, the injustice could be rectified. After another anxious and draining year of pushing forward, I lost

again. (I realize that fairness and legality are not always in sync. Thank goodness we have bills and amendments.)

Having to fight so hard for what is right, while grieving for the love of my life and best friend, took an immense emotional and physical toll. However, a few years later, when I learned of SB5873, I decided to try again. I contacted Senator Kohl-Welles who had the grace to give me her time and understanding, and who presented the amendment to the floor. This is not easy for me - every letter, meeting, hearing and contact with a Senator or Representative brings back the grief and difficulties I have experienced since Dennis died. It also brings to bear the painful fact that at almost 73 years of age, and a long work history, I am without my husband and I'm in a low income bracket.

Again I ask for your support. I hope justice will be served this time.
Thank you for your on-going attention to this issue.

Sincerely,
Sonja Ericson - Russell
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