

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §16-5V-6a

§16-5V-6a. County Firefighter Members.

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this article to the contrary, a person employed as a county firefighter may be a member of this retirement plan subject to the provisions of this section. Full-time employment as a county firefighter satisfies the definition of “covered employment” as defined in this article.

(b) Any county firefighter first employed by a county after the effective date of the revisions to this article made in the 2022 legislative session, shall be a member of this retirement plan by virtue of that employment and upon membership does not qualify for membership in any other retirement system administered by the board, so long as he or she remains employed in covered employment: *Provided*, That if a member has concurrent employment in an additional job or jobs the relevant concurrent employment provisions of this code shall apply.

(c) Any county firefighter employed in covered employment by an employer which is currently a participating public employer of the Public Employees Retirement System shall notify in writing both the county commission in the county in which he or she is employed and the board of his or her desire to become a member of the plan by December 31, 2022. Any county firefighter who elects to become a member of the plan ceases to be a member or have any credit for covered employment in any other retirement system administered by the board and shall continue to be ineligible for membership in any other retirement system administered by the board so long as the county firefighter remains employed in covered employment by an employer which is currently a participating public employer of this plan: *Provided*, That any county firefighter who does not affirmatively elect to become a member of the plan continues to be eligible for any other retirement system as is, from time to time, offered to other county employees but is ineligible for this plan regardless of any subsequent termination of employment and rehire as a county firefighter.

(d) Any county firefighter who was employed as a county firefighter prior to the effective date, but was not employed on the effective date of this article, shall become a member upon rehire as a county firefighter. For purposes of this section, the member’s years of service and credited service prior to the effective date shall not be counted for any purposes under this plan unless the county firefighter has not received the return of his or her accumulated contributions in the Public Employees Retirement System pursuant to §5-10-30 of this code. The member may request in writing to have his or her accumulated contributions and employer contributions from covered employment in the Public Employees Retirement System transferred to the plan. If the conditions of this subsection are met, all years of the county firefighter’s covered employment shall be counted as years of service for the purposes of this article.

(e) Any county firefighter employed in covered employment on the effective date of this article who has timely elected to transfer into this plan as provided in subsection (c) of this

section shall be given credited service at the time of transfer for all credited service then standing to the county firefighter's service credit in the Public Employees Retirement System regardless of whether the credited service, as defined in §5-10-2 of this code, was earned as a county firefighter. All credited service standing to the transferring county firefighter's credit in the Public Employees Retirement System at the time of transfer into this plan shall be transferred into the plan created by this article and the transferring county firefighter shall be given the same credit for the purposes of this article for all service transferred from the Public Employees Retirement System as that transferring county firefighter would have received from the Public Employees Retirement System as if the transfer had not occurred. In connection with each transferring county firefighter receiving credit for prior employment as provided in this subsection, a transfer from the Public Employees Retirement System to this plan shall be made pursuant to the procedures described in this article: *Provided*, That any member of this plan who has elected to transfer from the Public Employees Retirement System into this plan pursuant to subsection (c) of this section may not, after having transferred into and becoming an active member of this plan, reinstate to his or her credit in this plan any service credit relating to periods in which the member was not in covered employment as a county firefighter and which service was withdrawn from the Public Employees Retirement System prior to his or her elective transfer into this plan.

(f) Once made, the election made under this section is irrevocable. All county firefighters employed by an employer which is a participating public employer of the Public Employees Retirement System after the effective date and county firefighters electing to become members as described in this section shall be members as a condition of employment and shall make the contributions required by this article.