

CALIFORNIA STATE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

BILL ANALYSIS

Assembly Bill 804 **Assembly Member Strom-Martin (As amended 8/22/01)**

Position: **Neutral (Staff recommendation)**

Proponents: **California State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

Opponents: **None**

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) to provide both active and retired members with information concerning requirements for passing the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) if an individual wants to return to the classroom after being absent for 39 months.

This bill is the California Department of Education's annual omnibus "clean up" bill. Other provisions in the bill will not be addressed in this analysis.

HISTORY

None known

CURRENT PRACTICE

Current law requires a teacher who (1) holds a "life credential" or a "clear credential" that was issued prior to 1983 and (2) has not been employed in a position requiring certification in any school district for a period of 39 months or more to pass the CBEST prior to having his or her credential reissued. The Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) administers the CBEST. Current law does not require that individuals be notified of this provision. Although CalSTRS does inform members about the impact that returning to the classroom would have on their retirement benefits, CalSTRS does not currently provide information on teacher qualifications or requirements to members regarding the return to classroom. CalSTRS has, however, included information in its newsletters on programs and services not offered by CalSTRS, such as the ScholarShare education savings program, the teacher's state income tax credit and volunteer opportunities in the Peace Corps.

DISCUSSION

This bill requires CalSTRS to provide both active and retired members with notice regarding time constraints and possible requirements for passing the CBEST if the individual wants to return to the classroom after 39 months. The notice may be included:

- (1) In annual member publications;
- (2) Within packets of information provided to members on or prior to retirement; and
- (3) As an attachment to any warrants issued to members.

Approximately 200 benefit recipients, including previously retired and disabled members, reinstate to active teaching and approximately 150 retired members return to teaching or some type of credible service each year. At this time, CalSTRS has not determined the number of previously active members and benefit recipients who return to teaching after 39 months. Generally, however, it is believed that most reinstatements occur prior to the 39-month limit referred to in this bill. As a result, this requirement may affect only a small number of inactive members and benefit recipients.

While there are exceptions to the time constraints and possible requirements for passing the CBEST, CalSTRS would refer member questions about these requirements to CTC. Any communication from CalSTRS pursuant to this bill would include the CTC web site address and telephone number.

Currently there are several publications and resources provided to CalSTRS members that could be used to communicate the required notification. These include the CalSTRS Bulletin, Retired Educator, Legislative Alert and the CalSTRS website. To the extent that the bill is permissive on how this information is provided, any of these publications would be a suitable vehicle for implementing the notification. Modifications to Annual Statements and Warrant Stub messages would have to be tested prior to actually making these modifications to the START System.

FISCAL IMPACT

Benefit Program Costs – None

Administrative Costs – Potentially minor costs to modify CalSTRS publications and Annual Statements.

BOARD POSITION

Neutral. It is not uncommon for CalSTRS publications to include information on non-CalSTRS related programs that may be of interest to CalSTRS members. Further, the bill provides sufficient flexibility in disseminating the information so that it can be completed within existing resources.