

BILL NUMBER: AB 2233 (PER&SS) as amended 6/08/04

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 2233 is the annual California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) technical "housekeeping" bill. The bill makes various grammatical, technical and conforming changes to the Teachers' Retirement Law (TRL) to facilitate efficient administration of the State Teachers' Retirement Plan (Plan), which includes the Defined Benefit (DB) Program, the Defined Benefit Supplement (DBS) Program, and the Cash Balance (CB) Benefit Program.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

AB 2233 is necessary for the continued effective administration of the Plan.

POSITION AND SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

Sponsor. This bill will make grammatical and technical amendments necessary for continued effective administration of the system, and delete unessential provisions of the law.

ANALYSIS

AB 2233:

1. Adds conforming language to clarify the rights of registered domestic partners, as outlined in Chapter 421, Statutes of 2003;
2. Adds the term "spouse" to clarify the nonmember spouse payment requirements for purchasing additional service credit;
3. Adds the term "Employees" to clarify service performed under the San Francisco City and County *Employees'* Retirement System is excluded under the CalSTRS DB Program;
4. Deletes the text "age and" to clarify that only additional service credit is granted to DB Program members under the 2-Year Retirement Incentive Program;
5. Replaces the text "purchase additional service credit" with "redeposit refunded accumulated retirement contributions" to clarify redeposit conditions under the DB Program;
6. Deletes text in order to eliminate the requirement for witness signatures on a beneficiary designation form;
7. Deletes the term "annual" in order to allow the System to provide the correct calculation of the earnings limit imposed on members receiving a disability retirement benefit;
8. Replaces and adds language in order to be consistent with terminology used to explain the compensation earned if a member worked full-time;

9. Replaces the term “benefit ” with “unmodified” to clarify the actuarial reduction applied to the retirement benefit when a member elects the Partial Lump Sum under the DB Program;
10. Adds text in order to clarify the authority of the Teachers’ Retirement Board (Board) to set the employer contribution rate as a plan amendment.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Chapter 421, Statutes of 2003 (AB 205—Goldberg) extends the rights, protections, benefits, responsibilities, obligations and duties of current, former, and surviving married spouses to current, former and surviving registered domestic partners in California. This bill requires that any formal, same-sex union created in another state be recognized as a registered domestic partnership in California.

Chapter 313, Statutes of 2003 (AB 1207—Corbett) among other things, reopens and makes permanent an existing incentive program that provides an additional two years of service credit to members of the DB Program employed by participating school districts able to demonstrate cost savings.

Chapter 375, Statutes of 2002 (AB 2982—PER&SS) the CalSTRS annual technical housekeeping bill that among other things, clarifies the eligibility for disability benefits provided under the DB Program and the DBS Program.

Chapter 1029, Statutes of 2000 (AB 1933—Strom-Martin) pays a longevity bonus of \$200 to \$400 per month for members who retire after 2000 and accrue at least 30 years of credited service by 2011.

Chapter 965, Statutes of 1998 (AB 2765—PER&SS) the CalSTRS annual technical housekeeping bill that among other things, authorizes service subject to coverage by the San Francisco City and County Retirement System is excluded from coverage in the DB Program.

Chapter 1166, Statutes of 1992 (SB 1885—C. Green) establishes new survivor benefits and disability programs for all new members entering CalSTRS on or after 10/16/92. Also authorizes persons who were CalSTRS members on 10/15/92, to elect to participate in the new programs.

Chapter 542, Statutes of 1988 (SB 1190—Lockyer) requires CalSTRS, pursuant to a court order, to establish a separate account for service credit and contributions and interest awarded a nonmember spouse in a division of community property. The nonmember spouse would be eligible to elect a retirement allowance or a refund of contributions and interest.

Chapter 431, Statutes of 1980 (AB 2885—Elder) increases the maximum amount of retirement service credit earnable by an active CalSTRS member on an approved leave to serve as an elected member of an employee organization, from a minimum of eight years to a maximum of 12 years.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

1. Clarification of rights of registered domestic partners

Chapter 421, Statutes of 2003 (AB 205—Goldberg) extends on and after January 1, 2005, the rights, protections, responsibilities, obligations and duties of current, former and surviving married spouses to current, former and surviving registered domestic partners in California. This bill makes conforming

changes to the TRL to clarify the rights of registered domestic partners with respect to benefits and services under the Plan, as outlined in Chapter 421.

Education Code sections affected by amendment: 22007.5, 22171, 22650, 22651, 22661, 23812, 25000.9, 26002.5, 26004, 26140, 27400, 27401 and 27406

2. Nonmember spouse purchase of additional service credit

Existing law permits a nonmember spouse who is awarded a separate account to purchase additional service credit in which he or she has a community property interest. This bill adds the word “spouse” in one provision requiring all contributions and interest payments for the purchase of additional service credit by the nonmember spouse are due before the effective date of the nonmember spouse’s retirement.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 22663

3. Adds “Employees” to the San Francisco City and County Retirement System

Existing law excludes service performed under the San Francisco City and County Retirement System from coverage in the DB Program. This bill adds the term “Employees” to clarify that existing law refers to the San Francisco City and County *Employees’* Retirement System.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 22705.5

4. Clarification of two years additional service credit granted under the DB Program

Section 22714 authorizes participating school districts, community colleges and county offices of education to provide an additional two years of service credit as a retirement incentive to eligible members of the DB Program, if the school district is able to demonstrate a cost savings. This bill deletes the text “age and” to clarify that only additional service credit is granted to DB Program members under that specific section.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 22714

5. Redeposit conditions under the DB Program

Section 23023 permits members to redeposit any previously refunded accumulated retirement contributions, including interest, and the payment must be paid in full prior to retirement. This bill deletes inappropriate references in that section to the purchase of additional service credit, and replaces it with a correct reference to refunded accumulated retirement contributions. It also clarifies System requirements for members who elect to redeposit previously refunded contributions and interest under the DB Program.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 23023

6. Eliminates requirement for witness signature on beneficiary designation form

Existing law permits members of the DB Program to designate on a form, one or more beneficiaries for any benefit payable under CalSTRS at the time of a member’s death. A member must also have the

beneficiary designation form signed by two witnesses who are not designated as a beneficiary for benefits. This bill eliminates the requirement for the witness signatures on the beneficiary designation form, in order to reduce errors or omissions on the form due to incomplete witness signatures.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 23300

7. Calculation of the earnings limitation for Disability Retirement

Existing law permits a DB Program member who is receiving a Disability Retirement benefit to earn up to the specified limit in one calendar year without a reduction in his or her retirement allowance. That limit is adjusted each year by the increase in the California Consumer Price Index. This bill deletes the word “annual” to provide for the correct calculation of the increase in the earnings limit.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 24114

8. Clarification of the post-retirement earnings limitation calculation and average compensation earnable

Existing law establishes a maximum amount of creditable earnings a retired member can earn in a school year. This bill provides clarifying language that the amount of the earnings limitation be *adjusted* each year by the percentage *change* in the average *compensation* earnable.

The term “compensation” was inadvertently left out of Chapter 903, Statutes of 2002 (SB 1983-Soto), which changed the basis for calculating the post-retirement compensation limitation from the All Urban California Consumer Price Index to the average compensation earnable of active members, as amended in Chapter 859, Statutes of 2003 (SB 627-PE&R). This bill provides clarity in the terminology used to describe the compensation that would be earned if a member worked on a full-time basis.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 24214

9. “Unmodified” Allowance Payable under the Partial Lump Sum

Existing law permits a DB Program member who is age 60 and three months or age 60 with 30 years or more of service credit in the month he or she retires to receive part of their monthly service retirement benefit in a lump sum payment, in exchange for receiving a permanently reduced monthly benefit. However, the language is unclear that the allowance payable under this provision refers to the benefit payable before any modifications (*unmodified* allowance). This bill clarifies that the actuarial reduction applies to the member’s entire benefit.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 24221

10. Clarification of Board authority to set the employer contribution rate under the DB Program

Section 44987 permits DB Program members to take a leave of absence to serve as an elected officer of an employee organization, without loss of compensation. Section 22711 requires the employer to contribute funds at a rate set by the Board. The text “contribution rate shall be the” were inadvertently left out that adds conforming language to Section 44987 in order to clarify the authority of the Board.

Education Code section affected by amendment: 44987

This bill also includes a provision that provides that any other bill that amends a section that is amended in this bill supercedes the changes made by this bill.

FISCAL IMPACT

Benefit Program Cost – None.

Administrative Costs/Savings – The cost of the required changes to the System’s database is expected to be minor and absorbable.

SUPPORT

CalSTRS

OPPOSITION

None