
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6863

AN ACT CONCERNING POLICE OFFICER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

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BACKGROUND

§§ 1 & 15 — LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSION PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

Appropriates \$500,000 to DESPP for a statewide campaign promoting the law enforcement profession

The bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) commissioner, by January 1, 2024, to develop a statewide campaign to promote the law enforcement profession that uses a variety of media, including social media. In developing the campaign, the commissioner may consult with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association and any other entities he deems appropriate.

The bill appropriates \$500,000 from the General Fund for FY 24 to DESPP for the campaign.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 2 — POLICE CADET/EXPLORER PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Requires DESPP to (1) employ a full-time program coordinator to supervise police cadet and explorer programs and (2) allocate \$5,000 each fiscal year to every municipal police department that operates or plans to operate these programs

The bill requires DESPP to employ a full-time program coordinator to coordinate and oversee police cadet and explorer programs,

implement state standards and a best practices guide for them, and encourage creating and expanding the programs throughout the state.

Starting with FY 24, the department must annually allocate \$5,000 to each municipal police department that operates, or plans to operate, a cadet or explorer program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 3 — POLICE BASIC TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT GRANTS

Requires DESPP to reimburse municipal police departments for the cost of police officer basic training through an annual grant program

The bill requires DESPP to create a grant program for reimbursing municipal police departments for the cost of police officer basic training. The department must (1) set the grant application process and forms and (2) post a description of the program that includes the eligibility criteria and application process. The posting must be in a conspicuous place on DESPP's website by October 1, 2023. Grants must be provided annually starting FY 24.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 4 — STUDY ON SUBSTITUTING COLLEGE COURSES FOR POLICE BASIC TRAINING

Requires POST to study whether college-level criminal justice courses can be substituted for its police basic training courses

The bill requires the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) to examine the criminal justice courses offered by colleges and universities in Connecticut and determine (1) if the courses equal those required as part of a police officer's minimum basic law enforcement training at the Connecticut Police Academy and (2) under what conditions a police trainee would not need to complete an academy course because he or she had already completed an equivalent college-level course. (The bill does not establish a date by which this must be done.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 5 — LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT NONCITIZENS AS POLICE OFFICERS

Prohibits denying someone certification or employment as a police officer solely because he or she is a lawful permanent resident noncitizen

The bill prohibits POST from denying police officer certification and law enforcement units from denying someone employment as a police officer solely because he or she is a lawful permanent resident noncitizen. (See BACKGROUND for the bill’s definition of “law enforcement units” and “police officer.”)

The bill also makes a technical change.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 6 — POLICE SALARY INCREASE GRANTS

Requires DESPP, starting FY 24, to provide annual grants to the top 10 most populous municipalities to increase their police officers’ salaries

The bill requires DESPP to create a grant program for increasing police officer salaries in the top 10 most populous municipalities. Grants must be provided annually starting FY 24. The bill prohibits recipients from using the grant for any purpose other than increasing their police officers’ salaries.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§§ 7-9 — TUITION WAIVERS FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Provides tuition waivers for the state’s public colleges and universities to police officers employed for at least two years and any dependent child of an officer employed at least five years

The bill requires UConn, the Connecticut State University System, and the regional community-technical colleges to waive tuition for (1) a police officer who has at least two years of service as an officer in Connecticut and (2) any dependent child of a police officer who has at least five years of service as an officer in the state. (See BACKGROUND for the bill’s definition of “police officer.”)

Currently, the schools must waive tuition for nine other categories of students (e.g., surviving children of people who died while serving in

active duty in the armed forces).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 10 — LOAN REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Requires OHE to create an annual grant program to give up to \$5,000 a year, for up to 10 years, to police officers who have been employed for at least 10 years to reimburse their federal or state educational loans

The bill requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE), in collaboration with DESPP, to create a loan reimbursement program for individuals employed as police officers in Connecticut for at least 10 years. (See BACKGROUND for the bill’s definition of “police officer.”)

Under the program, eligible officers may receive an annual grant to help reimburse their federal or state educational loan payments for up to 10 years. The grant may be for up to 10% of their loans, but no more than \$5,000 in any year, and only to reimburse loan payments made while the person is employed as a police officer.

Under the bill, the OHE executive director may set the program application process and forms. The office may accept gifts, grants, and donations from any source, public or private, for the program. Grants must be awarded annually starting FY 24. The bill prohibits unexpended funds from lapsing at the end of a fiscal year and instead requires that they be available for the next fiscal year.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

§ 11 — STUDIES ON DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLANS AND RETIREMENT MEDICAL BENEFITS

Requires the State Retirement Commission to study (1) deferred retirement option plans towards developing one for police officers and (2) existing retirement medical benefits provided to police officers and their spouses

The bill requires the State Retirement Commission to study:

1. deferred retirement option plans, and make recommendations for developing a state-administered plan open to any police officer in Connecticut; and

2. the types and levels of retirement medical benefits provided to police officers and their spouses in the state and make recommendations on providing the benefits.

As part of its studies, the commission may consult with DESPP, municipal police departments, and any other entities it deems appropriate. The commission must report its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Security Committee by January 1, 2024.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 12 — STATE POLICE OFFICER RETIREES RETURNING TO SERVICE

Directs the governor to enter negotiations to amend the state police officers collective bargaining agreement to establish conditions for retired officers to return to service

By October 1, 2023, the bill requires the governor to start negotiating with the state police officers union to seek amendments to their collective bargaining agreement that would establish conditions under which a retired state police officer may return to service and (1) resume earning credit toward retirement benefits, in the same way as the retired officer earned credit before retirement, and (2) be eligible for earning his or her preretirement benefits.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 13 — MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICER RETIREES RETURNING TO SERVICE

Generally, requires collective bargaining agreements between municipalities and municipal police officers to allow retired, POST-certified officers to return to part- or full-time employment

The bill requires each collective bargaining agreement entered into or amended on or after July 1, 2024, between a municipality and a union that represents the municipality's police officers to allow officers who retire and remain POST-certified to return to part- or full-time employment as a police officer with the municipality while collecting his or her pension, to the maximum extent allowed under state and federal law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

§ 14 — VOLUNTEER POLICE AUXILIARY TASK FORCE

Creates an 11-member task force to (1) study the volunteer police auxiliary force and (2) make recommendations for improving and maximizing the force

The bill creates an 11-member task force to study the volunteer police auxiliary force and recommend ways to improve the force’s organization and maximize the services that auxiliary state police and municipal police officers may provide.

The task force members must be appointed within 30 days after the bill passes. The members and their appointees are as follows:

- two appointments each by the House speaker, Senate president pro tempore, and the governor;
- one appointment each by the House and Senate majority and minority leaders; and
- the DESPP commissioner, or his designee.

The bill allows legislative appointees to be General Assembly members. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the task force’s chairpersons from the members. The chairpersons must schedule the first task force meeting within 60 days after the bill passes and the Public Safety and Security Committee administrative staff must serve as the task force’s administrative staff.

The bill requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Security Committee by January 1, 2024. The task force terminates on that date or when it submits the report, whichever is later.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

BACKGROUND

Definitions (§§ 5 & 7-10)

By law and under sections 5 and 7-10 of the bill, “police officers” are sworn members of an organized local police department or the State

Police; appointed constables who perform criminal law enforcement duties; special police officers appointed under law (e.g., public assistance fraud investigators); or any members of a law enforcement unit who perform police duties (CGS § 7-294a(9)). A “law enforcement unit” is any state or municipal agency or department (or tribal agency or department created and governed under a memorandum of agreement) whose primary functions include enforcing criminal or traffic laws; preserving public order; protecting life and property; or preventing, detecting, or investigating crime (CGS § 7-294a(8)).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 22 Nay 3 (03/16/2023)