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SEN. JACQUE'S BIPARTISAN BILL TO STRENGTHEN WISCONSIN'S PUBLIC SAFETY WORKFORCE CLEARS COMMITTEE

Measure eliminates financial penalty for retired police and firefighters who return to work

MADISON... Retired police and firefighters would be able to return to work serving the public, without financial penalty, under bipartisan legislation passed by an Assembly committee today.

State Sen. André Jacques (R-New Franken), author of the proposal, said the measure would allow retired firefighters and law enforcement officers to fill critically-needed public safety, teaching and other government positions that are currently in high demand, without generating a second state pension.

"This bill is about common sense," said Senator Jacques. "We are facing unprecedented shortages in law enforcement, firefighting, and public sector instruction. AB 36 ensures that dedicated public servants who still want to serve their communities can do so—right here in Wisconsin—without being penalized for collecting the retirement benefits they've already earned."

The proposal echoes policies that were successfully implemented on a temporary basis during the COVID-19 emergency, and has garnered wide support from across the public safety spectrum. Organizations including the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, Badger State Sheriffs' Association, Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Fire Chiefs Association, Milwaukee Police Association, and Wisconsin Towns Association are all formally registered in support of the bill, with several members from the groups testifying in support of the legislation at its public hearings in the Senate and Assembly.

"Law enforcement officers, along with other retired state and local government workers, can already get another job after retirement anywhere without suspending their annuity, except with an employer that uses the state retirement system," Sen. Jacques said. "For Wisconsin government employers, that effectively blocks our law enforcement and firefighters from even considering returning to work to again protect and serve in Wisconsin."

Sen. Jacques said law enforcement officers and firefighters are generally allowed to retire at an earlier age than other professions due to the physical nature of the job. However, they are not allowed to collect their pensions and return to work full time if their new employer participates in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) program.

"Currently, nothing prevents an officer from retiring and getting a job at a place like Menard's, in private security or elsewhere," Sen. Jacques said. "But unfortunately, having to suspend their pension payments to take vital public safety positions in Wisconsin often sends these professionals across our state line."

Sen. Jacques said his legislation would help address these workforce challenges by allowing employers who are part of the WRS - such as the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), local units of government, and schools - to rehire individuals who had previously retired. Under current law, retired members of WRS are not able to work more than two-thirds time for a WRS employer without losing their state retirement benefits.

"This bill would allow dedicated firefighters and law enforcement officers to get jobs at police and fire training facilities, technical colleges and firing ranges, and even expand the applicant pool for leading our local departments, helping Wisconsin retain essential experience," Sen. Jacques said.

Sen. Jacques said the measure would not sanction “double-dipping,” because these rehired workers would not be eligible for a second pension payment, because they would not participate in the WRS.

“In fact, these rehired retirees could save taxpayer money, because their new employers would not be making the additional retirement payments mandated for other hires,” Sen. Jacques said.

The legislation ([Assembly Bill 36](#)) now moves to the full Assembly; it must also pass the Senate, and be signed by the Governor, to become law.

Senator André Jacques represents Northeast Wisconsin’s First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.

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