

Article 12C.

Retirement Benefits for State Law-Enforcement Officers.

**§ 143-166.30. Retirement benefits for State law-enforcement officers.**

(a) Definitions. – The following words and phrases as used in this Article, unless a different meaning is plainly required by the context, shall have the following meanings:

- (1) "Beneficiary" means any person in receipt of a retirement allowance or other benefit from a Retirement System.
- (2) "Creditable service" means membership service plus prior service plus military service allowable with a Retirement System.
- (3) "Employer" means the State of North Carolina and its departments, agencies and institutions.
- (4) "Law-enforcement officer" means a full-time paid employee of an employer who is actively serving in a position with assigned primary duties and responsibilities for prevention and detection of crime or the general enforcement of the criminal laws of the State or serving civil processes, and who possesses the power of arrest by virtue of an oath administered under the authority of the State.
- (5) "Member" means an officer included in the membership of a retirement system including former officers no longer employed who also elected to leave their accumulated contributions on deposit with a Retirement System.
- (6) "Officer" means a "law-enforcement officer."
- (7) "Participant" means an officer with an individual account with the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan.
- (8) "Regular accumulated contributions" means the sum of all contributions of a member made to the Retirement System, together with regular interest thereon, pursuant to G.S. 143-166 as the same appeared prior to January 1, 1985.
- (9) "Retirement allowance" means annual payments for life payable in monthly installments continuing until the death of a beneficiary.
- (10) "Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System" means the system provided for under G.S. 143-166.
- (11) "Special annuity account accumulated contributions" means the sum of all contributions of a member or an employer made to the Special Annuity Accounts for Members of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System, together with regular interest thereon, pursuant to G.S. 143-166.03 as the same appeared prior to January 1, 1985.
- (12) "Special Annuity Accounts" means the supplemental defined contribution provisions of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System, provided for under G.S. 143-166.03 as the same appeared prior to January 1, 1985.
- (13) "State" means the State of North Carolina.
- (14) "State Retirement System" means the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System of North Carolina provided for under Article 1 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes.
- (15) "Supplemental Retirement Income Plan" means a plan created in conformance with Section 401(a), 401(k), or any other section of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended.

(b) Basic Retirement System. – On and after January 1, 1985, law-enforcement officers employed by the State shall be members of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement

System and beneficiaries who were last employed as officers by the State, or who are surviving beneficiaries of officers last employed by the State, shall be beneficiaries of the State Retirement System and paid in benefit amounts then in effect. All members of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System last employed and paid by the State shall be members of the State Retirement System.

(c) Transfers of Assets and Liabilities to Other Retirement Systems. – As of January 1, 1985, certain assets and liabilities of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System shall be transferred to the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System and the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan in the amounts calculated and in the order of precedence enumerated as follows:

- (1) The regular accumulated contributions of members of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System employed by the State or last employed by the State shall be transferred from the annuity savings fund of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System to the annuity savings fund of the State Retirement System to the credit of each individual officer.
- (2) An amount equal to the present value of the liabilities on account of the retirement allowances payable to beneficiaries last employed as officers by the State and the surviving beneficiaries of officers last employed by the State, as calculated by the Retirement System's consulting actuary, shall be transferred from the pension accumulation fund of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System to the pension accumulation fund of the State Retirement System.
- (3) After the transfers provided for above, additional assets in the pension accumulation fund of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System shall be transferred to the pension accumulation fund of the State Retirement System, in an amount equal to the ratio of the accrued liabilities on account of members of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System employed by the State or last employed by the State to the total accrued liabilities on account of all members of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System.
- (4) The special annuity account accumulated contributions shall be transferred from the special annuity savings fund of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System to the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan pursuant to subsection (d) of this section to the credit of individual officers.

(d) Supplemental Retirement Income Plan for State Law-Enforcement Officers. – As of January 1, 1985, there shall be created a Supplemental Retirement Income Plan, hereinafter called the "Plan," established for the benefit of all law-enforcement officers employed by the State, who shall be participants. The Board of Trustees of the State Retirement System shall administer the Plan and shall, under the terms and conditions otherwise appearing herein, provide Plan benefits either (i) by establishing a separate trust fund in conformance with Section 401(a), Section 401(k) or other sections of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended or, (ii) by causing the Plan to affiliate with some master trust fund providing the same benefits for participants. The Plan shall be separate and apart from any retirement systems.

In addition to the contributions transferred from the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System and the contributions otherwise provided for in this Article, participants may make voluntary contributions to the Plan to be credited to the designated individual accounts of participants.

All contributions to the Plan shall be credited to the individual accounts of participants, and except as provided in subsection (g1) of this section, shall be fully and immediately vested in

the name of the participant, and shall be invested according to each participant's election, as provided by the Board of Trustees, including but not limited to time deposits, and both fixed and variable investments. The Plan may provide for loans to participants, at reasonable rates of interest to be charged, from participants' individual accounts, and may provide for withdrawal of contributions on account of hardship.

The benefit to a participant in the Plan shall be either a lump-sum distribution or a distribution in periodic installments of the participant's account payable under retirement, disability, or termination of employment. Upon the death of a participant there shall be paid the same lump-sum distribution or periodic installments to the surviving spouse of the participant or otherwise to the participant's estate; provided, should a participant instruct the Board of Trustees in writing that he does not wish these benefits to be paid to his spouse or estate, then the benefits shall be paid to the person or persons as the participant may name for this purpose.

Upon retirement, a participant in the Plan may elect to transfer any portion of his eligible accumulated contributions, not including any Roth after-tax contributions and the earnings thereon, to the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System and receive, in addition to his basic service, early or disability retirement allowance a special retirement allowance which shall be based on his eligible accumulated account balance at the date of the transfer of the assets.

(e) State Contributions to the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan. – Under all other restrictions as are herein provided, the State shall contribute monthly to the individual accounts of participants who are employed by the State an amount equal to five percent (5%) of the compensation of each participant. The contributions so paid shall be in addition to the contributions on account of court cost assessments as hereinafter provided.

Contributions shall be made to the individual accounts of all participants in the Plan on a per capita basis in equal shares, equal to the sum of the one-half dollar (\$0.50) for each cost of court assessed and collected under G.S. 7A-304.

(e1) Rights of Participants under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. – A participant whose employment is interrupted by reason of service in the Uniformed Services, as that term is defined in section 4303(16) of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, Public Law 103-353, hereafter referred to as "USERRA", shall be entitled to all rights and benefits that the participant would have been entitled to under this section had the participant's employment not been interrupted, provided that the participant returns to service as a law enforcement officer while the participant's reemployment rights are protected under the provisions of USERRA.

(f) Administration. – The provisions of the State Retirement System pertaining to administration and management of funds under G.S. 135-6 and 7 are made applicable to the Plan.

(g) Exemption from Garnishment and Attachment. – Except as provided in subsection (g1) of this section, the right of a participant in the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan to the benefits provided under this Article is nonforfeitable and exempt from levy, sale, and garnishment.

(g1) Forfeiture of Benefits for Certain Felonies. – Participants in the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan for State Law-Enforcement Officers whose benefits are forfeited under G.S. 135-18.10A shall also forfeit contributions paid on or after December 1, 2012, on behalf of the participant by the State to the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan. Any funds forfeited shall be deposited in the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan.

(h) Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, any pending or inchoate rights of a member of the Law-Enforcement Officers' Retirement System as of their transfer to the State Retirement System on January 1, 1985, including the rights to a vested deferred retirement

allowance and to commence retirement at certain ages with required years of service as a law-enforcement officer, shall in no way be diminished; provided, however, in no event may a member commence retirement and continue membership service with the same Retirement System.

No eligible officer shall be precluded from exercising that officer's pending or inchoate rights under this section, should the officer elect to make Roth after-tax contributions to the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan, except that these Roth after-tax contributions and the earnings thereon shall not be subsequently transferred to the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. (1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1034, s. 248; 1985, c. 479, s. 196(s); 1989, c. 792, s. 2.7; 1995, c. 361, s. 5; 2006-141, s. 1; 2007-384, s. 10.5; 2010-72, s. 11(a); 2012-193, s. 13; 2013-288, s. 1(a).)