LEGISLATIVE ALERT

Protect your personal information!

HB 1888 – An act relating to protecting employee information from public disclosure

The LEOFF 1 Coalition (representing retired LEOFF Plan 1 law enforcement officers and firefighters) and the Washington State Retired Deputy Sheriffs and Police Officers Association (WSRDSPOA) are requesting that retired LEOFF Plan 1 law enforcement officers and firefighters be added to the public disclosure exemption list.

LEOFF Plan 1 retirees are **not** Government employees anymore. As this bill is currently worded, they are not fully protected from public information requests.

The reason we are asking to specifically have LEOFF Plan 1 retirees added to the exemption list is because a public disclosure request has been submitted to the Department of Retirement Systems by the Seattle Times and the Freedom Foundation. The Seattle Times and the Freedom Foundation are requesting ALL personal information, minus street addresses, of all active and retired law enforcement officers and firefighters. If they can access this information, anyone can. If these requests are fulfilled, and the requested information is released, then there are issues because law enforcement officers and firefighters work dangerous jobs.

Law enforcement officers work undercover during their careers, sometimes involved in dangerous situations where their lives were threatened (e.g., “I will kill you when I get out of jail.”). Their job required getting close to the mob and other organized criminals to gather intelligence. They also had to get close to people involved in illegal activities such as human trafficking, murder, drug manufacturing, child pornography, money laundering, prostitution, and racketeering. Their personal information should be protected for the safety of them and their families.

Firefighters are required to report illegal activities when inspecting a building. This includes such situations as an inspection uncovering child abuse or neglect. Reporting such situations could put them and their families in danger if their personal information is not protected.

The Department of Retirement Systems does not have the capability to sort LEOFF Plan 1 members who fall under the Vulnerable Persons Act. Some LEOFF Plan 1 retirees are vulnerable adults who are unable to take care of themselves or are unable to defend themselves from significant harm or exploitation. The average age of LEOFF Plan 1 retired law enforcement officers and firefighters is 75. Their bodies are worn out. There is a growing number of these retirees living in care centers and assisted living facilities. They are suffering from a variety of health problems such as dementia, Alzheimer’s, chronic diseases, heart problems, complications from strokes, cancer, hearing problems, sight problems, etc. They should be protected from possible dangers from their careers, as well as con artists who often target the elderly for an easily confused target.

The personal information of their LEOFF Plan 1 retired parents needs to be protected from public disclosure, since RCW 42.56.230 protects the personal information of children under 18. There are LEOFF Plan 1 retirees whose children are under 18 and live at home.

Please amend HB 1888 to protect all LEOFF Plan 1 retirees’ personal information from public disclosure releases by adding them to the exemption list.

Thank you for your consideration.