



Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (LCPR)

Purpose, Operation, Composition, Staffing, History

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Prepared by LCPR Staff

Introduction

The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (“LCPR”) is a bipartisan joint commission within the legislative branch of the State of Minnesota. It is called a “joint” commission because its members are legislators from both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The LCPR is unique in the State’s legislative and executive branches in that it is the only body that is focused on pensions and retirement-related topics.

The LCPR was established as a permanent commission in 1967, when Minnesota Statute § 3.85 was enacted.

Purpose and Scope of Work

***The State’s
pension plans
are governed
by a complex
set of statutes***

The purpose of the LCPR has evolved over time. Initially, its stated purpose was to “study and investigate public retirement systems.” (Minn. Stat. § 3.85, Subd. 1.)

Today, the primary purpose of the LCPR is to consider and decide whether to recommend for passage legislation relating to the pension and defined contribution plans that provide retirement benefits for state, county, municipal, school district, and other public employees across the State of Minnesota. Because the terms and conditions for benefits under these retirement plans are set forth in statute, legislation is required to make changes to benefits, adjust contribution levels, or enact measures to maintain the actuarial soundness of the plans.

In addition to its legislative work, LCPR performs the following functions:

***LCPR oversees
3 statewide
pension plans,
a large school
district plan,
and 500
firefighter
retirement
plans***

- Oversight of the operational and actuarial condition of the state-wide public pension systems: the Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS), the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA), and the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA);
- Oversight of the pension plan for the St. Paul school district and approximately 500 firefighter relief associations across the state;
- Review of the annual actuarial valuations and periodic experience studies for all the pension plans for public employees;
- Study and development of pension benefit design changes and, as appropriate, pension system reforms;
- Consider and take action on reports from work groups convened during the interim by LCPR staff to address issues that arose during the legislative session; and
- Consider retirement topics, in general, current events involving other states' public pension plans, changes in federal law related to pensions and retirement, and trends in the private sector for providing retirement benefits.

Operation and Procedures

During the legislative session, the LCPR functions like a House or Senate subcommittee with responsibility for bills related to pensions and retirement. The LCPR typically meets weekly to consider and hear testimony on proposed pension legislation introduced throughout the session. The Chair of the LCPR determines all meeting agendas and decides which bills will be heard.

When considering a bill, the LCPR takes testimony and engages in deliberations. Bills approved by the LCPR are typically compiled into a single omnibus pension bill. The LCPR concludes the legislative session with the approval of the omnibus pension bill. The LCPR then forwards the bill to the appropriate House and Senate committees with its recommendation. Currently, the committees of record for public pension bills are the House Committee on State Government Finance and Policy and the Senate Committee on State and Local Government. Typically, committees do not schedule proposed pension legislation for a hearing until the legislation has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the LCPR.

The LCPR may meet during the interim between sessions. Interim meetings usually focus on pension and retirement issues that were raised during the legislative session but not resolved. Interim meetings give the LCPR more time to develop, research, and discuss new or complex issues in preparation for the upcoming legislative session.

LCPR staff drafts bills, conducts research, and prepares legal analysis at the request of legislators

If a legislator wishes to introduce a bill relating to pensions or retirement, the legislator or the legislator's staff may contact LCPR staff to request that a bill be prepared and to discuss any questions or concerns. LCPR staff will produce the bill, perform any related research of facts or law, and, if appropriate, prepare a memo that provides background information and analyzes the policy and legal implications. If the bill impacts one or more pension plans and the legislator has given consent, LCPR staff will work with staff at the pension plan to obtain additional background information and discuss possible alternatives for resolving the issue addressed by the bill.

Typically, when the legislator is satisfied with the form of the bill they wishes to introduce, the next steps are the following:

***The
legislative
process:
pension bills***

- The legislator will introduce the bill in the House or Senate, as appropriate. Once the bill is introduced, it will be referred to the relevant committee of record, which will forward the bill to the LCPR for consideration.
- The legislator will contact the Chair of the LCPR to request a hearing on the bill at an upcoming meeting of the LCPR.
- Staff will work with the legislator to provide as much notice as possible regarding when the bill will be considered by the LCPR and will arrange for testifiers, such as a pension plan director or the head of any agency impacted by the legislation.
- At the Chair's discretion, the bill will be heard by the LCPR. Following testimony and member questions and comments, the Chair of the LCPR may take a vote to approve the bill or may decide to table the bill for further consideration at a future meeting.
- If the LCPR approves the bill, it is typically incorporated into the omnibus pension bill in process.
- At one of the last meetings of the LCPR, the LCPR will approve the omnibus pension bill and any amendments and return the bill, as amended, to the committee of record.
- The committee of record will hear the bill and the LCPR's recommendation and, typically, will approve the bill, possibly with amendments.
- The bill may need to be heard by other committees that have jurisdiction, such as the House or Senate finance or education committee.
- The final step in the legislative process is back to the floors of the House and the Senate for approval. If the bills in each chamber are not identical, they will proceed to a conference committee, where a compromise bill is typically approved and then sent again to each chamber for final approval.
- If the bill passes in both the House and the Senate, it is sent to the Governor, who may sign or veto the bill.
- If the Governor signs the bill, it becomes law.

Composition and Members

The LCPR has 14 members

The LCPR consists of seven members of the House and seven members of the Senate, all of whom are appointed at the commencement of each biennium. A chair, vice-chair, and secretary are elected by the LCPR members at the commencement of each biennium and serve as the LCPR Executive Committee. The chair alternates between House and Senate members each biennium.

2025-2026 Commission Members

Senate Members			
	Nick A. Frentz, <i>Chair</i>	Jeff R. Howe, <i>Secretary</i>	Carla J. Nelson
			
	Sandra L. Pappas	Jordan Rasmusson	Judy Seeberger
House Members			
	Ethan Cha	Josiah Hill	Leon Lillie, <i>Vice Chair</i>
			
	Danny Nadeau	Tim O'Driscoll	Terry Stier
2025 Executive Committee	Chair: Senator Nick A. Frentz	Member: Representative Leon Lillie	Member: Senator Jeff R. Howe

LCPR Staff and Actuary

LCPR has three full-time non-partisan staff members

The LCPR has three full-time non-partisan staff members who assist the LCPR with meetings and other business and serve as a resource to any legislator interested in pension or retirement topics. The Executive Director and Analyst are attorneys, licensed and authorized to practice law in Minnesota.

LCPR Staff



Executive Director

Susan Lenczewski
(651) 296-1309
susan.lenczewski@
lcpr.mn.gov



Analyst

Aleena Wilson
(651) 296-7820
aleena.wilson@
lcpr.mn.gov



Commission Assistant

Mollie Pierson
(651) 296-2750
mollie.pierson@
lcpr.mn.gov

At the request of a legislator, LCPR staff will draft legislation, prepare background information, and provide policy and legal analyses of proposed legislation and existing law.

The LCPR retains its own consulting actuary, which performs work for the LCPR, at the request and with the oversight of the Executive Director or Analyst.

Check out the LCPR website: lcpr.mn.gov

The staff maintains a website (lcpr.mn.gov), which provides easy access to meeting agendas and materials, pending and approved pension bills, actuarial reports and experience studies on the pension plans, work groups, and issue briefs and background information on pension topics.

The staff have access to a wide range of resources, including resources that provide answers to questions relating to federal law governing pensions and retirement. The staff subscribes to BNA's Benefits Practice Resource Center and have memberships to the National Association of Public Pension Attorneys, National Council of State Legislators, and the Minnesota State Bar Association, which allow access to each of these entities' member resources.

Staff offices are located on the first floor of the Centennial Office Building.

LCPR History and Milestones

Over the years, the LCPR has operated in various forms and has dealt with an array of topics. The following is a timeline of the significant milestones leading up to the present-day LCPR:

Timeline

1943: The Interim Commission to Study Minneapolis Pension System was created to review the Minneapolis public pension plans. Three Minneapolis Senators and three Minneapolis Representatives were appointed to the commission (Laws 1943, Ch. 449).

1945: The Interim Commission issued a report on the stability of the Minneapolis public pension plans, the fairness and cost of the benefits, and the possibility of plan consolidations.

1955: The Public Retirement Interim Commission was created to report on the state's public retirement plans to address PERA's severe underfunding and the need to provide a consistent source of employer funding for all plans (Laws 1955, Ch. 829).

1957-1965: The Public Retirement Interim Commission was reestablished four times to study pension problems and make recommendations through a biennial report (Ex. Sess. Laws 1957, Ch. 13; Ex. Sess. Laws 1959, Ch. 82; Laws 1963, Ch. 888, Sec. 9; and Laws 1965, Ch. 888, Sec. 5).

1965: The Public Retirement Interim Commission recommended creating a permanent Legislative Commission on Pensions.

1967-1971: The Commission transitioned from an interim commission focused on producing a biennial policy report to a policy advisory commission focused on processing proposed pension legislation. The Commission continued to issue a biennial report until the early 1980s.

1971: Legislation was enacted to eliminate the June 30, 1973, sunset date for the Commission.

1975: The Commission's name was changed to the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (Laws 1975, Ch. 271, Sec. 3).

LCPR History and Milestones

1984: LCPR's duties were expanded to include issuing standards for public pension actuarial work and hiring an actuarial consulting firm to prepare the annual actuarial valuations of the state's largest public pension plans (Laws 1984, Ch. 564, Sec. 1-2).

1994: An independent consultant, retained by the Office of the Legislative Auditor, conducted a review on the adequacy of the oversight of local public employee pension plans and prepared a report for the Legislative Audit Commission.

1995: The LCPR, along with other legislative commissions, was scheduled to sunset on July 1, 1996. However, after conducting review hearings, the Legislative Coordinating Commission elected to continue the operation of the LCPR (Laws 1995, Ch. 248, Art. 2, Sec. 6).

1997: LCPR membership was increased from 10 members (five members from each body) to 12 members (six members from each body) (Laws 1997, Ch. 202, Art. 2, Sec. 5).

1999: LCPR membership was reduced to 10 members (Laws 1999, Ch. 222, Art. 20).

2004: The public pension plans were allowed to jointly retain a consulting actuary to issue the actuarial valuations and experience studies rather than the LCPR's consulting actuary (Laws 2004, Ch. 223, Sec. 6).

2008: Each public pension plan was authorized to retain its own consulting actuary. The LCPR was permitted to retain a consulting actuarial firm to audit or review the plans' actuarial work (Laws 2008, Ch. 349, Art. 10).

2011: LCPR membership was increased from 10 members to 14 members. A new restriction was enacted that limited the number of members from each body who are from the majority political party to no more than five of the seven members, effective on January 16, 2013 (1st Spec. Sess. Laws 2011, Ch. 10, Art. 3, Sec. 1).

LCPR History and Milestones

2016: The governor vetoed the omnibus pension bill for the first time in the history of the State.

2017: The governor vetoed the omnibus pension bill.

2018: The governor signed into law historic pension funding reforms that reduced the actuarial assumption for investment rate of return from 8% to 7.5%, reduced post-retirement increases, ended deferred augmentation, and increased employer contributions, among other reforms (Laws 2018, Ch. 211).

2020: The work of the Commission was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the State Capitol complex being closed to the public and required the Commission staff and much of the rest of the Legislature to work remotely starting mid-March and continuing for the rest of 2020 and 2021.

2023: The governor signed four retirement bills into law: the 2023 Omnibus Pension Policy bill, the 2023 Omnibus Pension Budget bill, the Minnesota Secure Choice Retirement Program bill, and a bill that modified the disability benefits under the Police and Fire and State Patrol Plans (Laws 2023, Chapters 45, 46, 47, 48).

LCPR Budget

Until 1995, the LCPR received a specific direct appropriation from the Legislature. A statutory change in 1995 modified that process, combining various joint legislative agency budget amounts into a single appropriation to the Legislative Coordinating Commission ("LCC") and specifically allocating appropriation amounts only to the Office of the Revisor of Statutes, the Legislative Reference Library, and the Office of the Legislative Auditor. This began the current practice in which the LCC allocates to the LCPR its biennial budget and those of other legislative commissions and offices.

During each legislative session in which a budget is approved (*i.e.*, in the odd-numbered years), the LCPR Executive Director prepares a budget proposal within the guidelines established by the LCC, which is incorporated into the LCC's budget for approval by the LCC, and eventually by the House and Senate state government committees.

The LCPR budget includes funding for staff salaries and benefits, per diems and other expenses for legislators, fees for the retained consulting actuary, office supplies and equipment, and staff education and training.

Other States

Minnesota is not the only state with a body devoted to the oversight of pensions and retirement. According to a 2019 report published by the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, the following states and districts have a joint legislative committee on pensions and retirement:

<i>Arkansas</i>	<i>Illinois</i>	<i>Minnesota</i>	<i>Nevada</i>	<i>Virginia</i>
<i>Colorado</i>	<i>Iowa</i>	<i>Mississippi</i>	<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Connecticut</i>	<i>Kansas</i>	<i>Missouri</i>	<i>Oregon</i>	<i>West Virginia</i>
<i>Delaware</i>	<i>Maine</i>	<i>Montana</i>	<i>Tennessee</i>	<i>Wisconsin</i>
<i>District of Columbia</i>	<i>Maryland</i>	<i>North Dakota</i>	<i>Utah</i>	<i>Wyoming</i>

A number of states have standing committees in either the state's house of representatives or senate, or both houses, that have direct responsibility for pensions and retirement.

Finally, a number of states have pension-related commissions, panels, organizations, or boards located within the executive branch:

<i>California</i>	<i>Massachusetts</i>	<i>Texas</i>
<i>Florida</i>	<i>Michigan</i>	<i>Vermont</i>
<i>Kentucky</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Louisiana</i>	<i>Ohio</i>	<i>West Virginia</i>