

Disability Benefit Subcommittee Meeting  
October 2, 1981  
Room 81, State Office Building  
9:00 A.M..

Chairman Frank Rodriguez called the meeting to order.

PRESENT: Senators Renneke and Frederickson  
Representatives Sarna and Rodriguez

Bill Bassett, Mankota City Manager, addressed the issues of permitting each city to have some control over their relief associations' granting of disability benefits by requiring municipal representation on the boards and the need for a change in the definition of disability to permit partial disabilities.

Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: light duty employment; civilianization of dispatcher's office; medical requirements before granting of disability; use of Social Security definition of disability; possible alternative duty; and need for offsets.

Tom Waarvik, Faribault City Council member, presented the members with a copy of a letter from the Mayor of Faribault with the following five points:.

- 1) the city wants to be represented on the pension board to have input into the granting of disability pensions;
- 2) city wants to participate in the selection of the actuary for the relief associations;
- 3) lack of information available concerning granting of disability benefit to police officer;
- 4) city can't appeal awarding of disability benefits; and
- 5) the city requests the Legislature to raise the statutory assumption concerning investment earnings from 5% to 6%.

In summary, the city's main position is that the city should have more input into the running of the relief associations since the taxpayers of the city pay the majority of the costs of the associations.

Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: need to public information concerning the granting of disability benefits; less hazardous job alternatives; Chapter 356 requirements concerning the selection of an actuary; appeal mechanisms; percentage of salary paid by employees for benefit package; review of benefit awards by State Auditor; and mandatory alternative duty employment.

Karl Nollenberger, Richfield City Manager, addressed the issues of employees receiving both disability benefits and tax-free workers compensation benefits, both of which are paid for by the taxpayers of the municipality.

Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: definition of disability; mental disability; offsets; alternative duty; and whether alternative duty should be mandatory.

Alice Rainville, President of the Minneapolis City Council, submitted written and oral testimony to the Subcommittee. The testimony concentrated on the city's efforts to reduce the number of early retirements due to disabilities, especially in the fire department. Testimony highlighted the following areas: the cost of disability as early retirement; the civilianization of many light duty jobs; and cost savings of employing disabled firefighters when the disability pension subsidizes the lower-paying job's salary.

Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: need for cooperation of city doctor and fire chief to get disabled back to work; changing cost figures may encourage the rehiring of disabled public safety workers; and need for retraining of disabled when necessary.

Donald Fraser, Mayor of Minneapolis, presented written and oral testimony to the Subcommittee. His testimony addressed the issues of how the city of Minneapolis intended to reduce the number of firefighters retiring early due to disability pensions: review of pre-employment medical exams; establishment of a physical fitness program and mandatory physical fitness standards; use of three physicians to determine disability; coordination with medical testing done by Fire Department; need for close cooperation between Fire Chief and Relief Association in assignment to light duty jobs; identification of light duty jobs; savings to city if pension fund pays disability as supplement to alternative duty salary; need for retraining; legal problems resulting from reemployment in alternative duty positions; and offsets.

Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: reassignment of susceptible persons to light duty jobs as preventative measure; safeguards from having three doctors determine disability; and cost savings when reemploy disabled.

Steve Boysen, Mankato police, described the process used in granting a disability pension to an officer who developed a rash as a nervous reaction to police duty, even light duty assignments.

A question from the Subcommittee concerned the number of doctors consulted in the case. There were two.

Stan Peskar, League of Minnesota Cities, stated that the question of granting a disability benefit to an officer who suffered a rash was intended to indicate that there are different degrees of disability.

Hubert Warren, Moorhead police, described the process in Moorhead for granting a disability benefit. He also addressed the problem that a statutory change is needed to permit officers receiving a disability benefit to return to work for the municipality.

Jim Heim, Duluth fire, addressed the problem of pre-employment screening and the need to establish a second injury fund to those employed with pre-existing conditions.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 A.M.