

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1987 SESSION

CHAPTER 508
HOUSE BILL 584

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH WINSTON-SALEM FIREMEN'S RETIREMENT FUND
ASSOCIATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Chapter 388, Session Laws of 1973, as amended by Chapter 15, Session Laws of 1977, Chapter 284, Session Laws of 1979, Chapter 647, Session Laws of 1981 and Chapter 464, Session Laws of 1983 is rewritten to read:

"Section 1. That the name of the Association herein established shall be Winston-Salem Firemen's Retirement Fund Association, hereinafter referred to as the Association. References to the Association as of a date prior to April 3, 1979, and following July 1, 1973, shall mean the Winston-Salem Fire-Public Safety Retirement Fund Association, which was the name of the Association during such period.

Sec. 2. Subject to the provisions of Section 16 hereof, the following persons shall automatically be members of the Association:

(a) As of July 1, 1987, any person who was a member of the Association following the close of business of the Association immediately preceding such date.

(b) As of July 1, 1987, and thereafter, any person not covered under (a) above who shall have been regularly and continuously employed full time by the Fire Department of the City of Winston-Salem (hereinafter referred to as the Fire Department), including any Fire Department mechanic or electrician, who shall have attained his 18th birthday and shall not have attained his 40th birthday. Any person not covered under (a) above who was hired by the Fire Department prior to July 1, 1987, and continues to be employed by the Fire Department on such date, and who had attained his 30th birthday when hired but had not then attained his 40th birthday, may elect within 90 days following July 1, 1987, to become a member by contributing to the Association the sum of twelve dollars (\$12.00) per month from his date of hire by the Fire Department, plus interest at the rate of seven percent (7%) per annum, computed on the amount accrued as of the end of each fiscal year of the Association.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) immediately preceding, as a condition to any person's becoming a member of the Association pursuant to the provisions of subsection 2(b) or 16(a), the Trustees may require such person to undergo a physical examination by a physician or physicians of good standing or repute selected by the Trustees. If it shall be found from such physician's report that such person is not in good physical or mental condition as of the date he would be eligible to become a member of the Association, such person shall be denied membership in the Association. The determinations of whether or not such person shall be required to undergo a

physical examination and whether or not he is in good physical or mental condition shall be made by the Trustees. In making such determinations, all persons similarly situated shall be treated alike. The cost of any medical examination required pursuant to the provisions of this subsection (c) shall be borne by the person seeking membership in the Association.

Sec. 3. The Association may provide and raise funds in any legal manner to be used as a pension fund for such person or persons as may be entitled thereto under the provisions of this act and to such extent as is hereinafter set out.

Sec. 4. The governing body of the Association shall consist of a Board of Trustees five in number, four from the membership of the Fire Department, and one to be appointed by the Insurance Commissioner of the State of North Carolina.

Sec. 5. The Trustees from the membership of the Fire Department shall be elected by the members of the Fire Department for four-year terms. Such terms shall be staggered, so that two of the Trustees shall be elected during the month of January of each year evenly divisible by two. Prior to each election, each fire company may, by majority vote of the active members of the company, nominate one candidate for election as Trustee. Only members of the Association, in good standing, who have continuously served in the Fire Department for a period of at least four years shall be eligible for election as Trustees. The two nominees receiving the highest number of votes cast in such election shall be elected. A tie shall be resolved by casting lots. In such election, each member of the Association in good standing may vote for two nominees. For purposes of this Section 5, the administrative offices of the Fire Department shall be deemed to be a fire company.

Sec. 6. Any Trustee may resign at any time by giving notice in writing to the other Trustees. Should any Trustee who is a member of the Fire Department cease to be a member of the Fire Department for any reason, he shall automatically cease to be a Trustee. With regard to any Trustee elected by the members of the Association who resigns or ceases to be a Trustee for any reason, his successor shall be elected as provided in Section 5 of this act; provided, that such election shall be held as soon as practicable following such resignation or cessation, each member of the Association in good standing may vote for only one nominee, the one nominee receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected, and the election shall be only for the remaining unexpired term of the predecessor Trustee. Should the Trustee who was appointed by the Insurance Commissioner of the State of North Carolina resign or cease to be a Trustee for any reason, his successor shall be appointed by the said Insurance Commissioner.

Sec. 7. The Board of Trustees is herein fully vested with the exclusive right and authority to pay out the funds of this Association, as provided for in this act. All matters and claims provided for under this act shall be passed upon by said Trustees and all decisions and actions of said Trustees shall be binding upon the Association and the members thereof. Every Trustee shall be entitled to one vote except the chairman of the Board of Trustees, who shall be entitled to vote only to break a tie. At every annual meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Trustees shall elect a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer. The secretary and treasurer need not be Trustees, and the

offices of secretary and treasurer may be combined into a single office, in the discretion of the Trustees. The annual meeting of the Board of Trustees shall be held as soon as is practicable following the end of each calendar year at such place and at such time as shall be determined by the Trustees.

Sec. 8. The secretary of the Association (or the secretary-treasurer if such offices shall be combined into a single office) shall be entitled to receive compensation in an amount not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00) per month, as determined by the Trustees. The Trustees, as such, including the chairman and the vice-chairman, shall serve without compensation. The Trustees may authorize reimbursement by the Association to any officer or Trustee of the Association for all expenses incurred by such person in connection with services rendered in behalf of the Association.

Sec. 9. The Trustees shall elect a custodian of all funds and property of the Association, provided that such custodian shall have first offered proof satisfactory to the Trustees, by bond or otherwise, that it is and will be financially responsible for all property coming into its hands in a fiduciary capacity. Said custodian shall not release any of the funds or property of the Association for reasons other than investment of such funds or property except upon the written authorization of the Trustees.

The Trustees shall also elect an investment manager who may or may not be the same person as the custodian. Any such investment manager shall be a bank, or an insurance company, or an entity registered under the Investment Advisor's Act of 1940. The investment manager shall be authorized to invest and reinvest the funds or property of the Association in the investment manager's own judgment and discretion. The investment manager shall report to the Trustees on a periodic basis, but not less frequently than each calendar quarter. The investment manager (including said custodian when acting as investment manager) shall not be liable to the Association for any act of failure to act by it, except for gross negligence or willful misconduct.

Sec. 10. A special meeting of the Board of Trustees may be called by the chairman or vice-chairman, or by any two Trustees, upon 24 hours' written notice delivered in person to the members of said Board or mailed to the last known address of each member of said Board. A majority of the Trustees in office shall constitute a quorum at any meeting and a majority vote of the Trustees at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall constitute action by the Trustees.

Sec. 11. The chairman of the Board of Trustees, when present, shall preside at all meetings. In the absence of the chairman, the vice-chairman shall act as chairman.

Sec. 12. The secretary shall keep in complete form such data as shall be necessary for actuarial valuation of the funds of the Association and for checking the disbursements for and on behalf of the Association. He shall keep minutes of all proceedings of the Board of Trustees and of the Association, and the same shall be kept in a place selected by the Trustees. The treasurer of the Association shall post yearly at each fire station and at the office of each police district, as soon as practicable following the end of each year, a financial statement of the Association.

Sec. 13. The treasurer of the Association shall deposit with the custodian all funds and property that may come into his hands for the Association. The said treasurer shall obtain a receipt from the custodian for all funds and property delivered to the custodian

by the treasurer. Said custodian shall invest and reinvest such funds and property as directed by the investment manager appointed under Section 9. Notwithstanding any contrary provisions of Section 9 or of this section, the Trustees are specifically authorized and empowered to invest funds of the Association by depositing such funds with the Winston-Salem Firemen's Credit Union on condition that the Association shall receive interest at an annual rate agreed upon by the Association and such credit union.

Sec. 14. The custodian and the investment manager shall receive compensation for services rendered as may be agreed upon from time to time in writing by the Trustees and by the custodian (with respect to services rendered by the custodian) or the investment manager (with respect to services rendered by the investment manager). The Trustees shall have the authority to employ legal counsel when, in the opinion of the Trustees, legal counsel is necessary. In case of such employment, said counsel shall be paid such fees as may be fair and reasonable as agreed upon in writing by the Trustees and the counsel so employed.

Sec. 15. On or before August 31, 1987, the Board of Trustees of the Winston-Salem Firemen's Relief Fund shall transfer to the Board of Trustees of the Winston-Salem Firemen's Retirement Fund Association out of properties and funds belonging to the Winston-Salem Firemen's Relief Fund the sum of fifty-four thousand dollars (\$54,000) in cash or assets. The assets so transferred pursuant to the immediately preceding sentence shall be transferred upon the basis of the fair market value thereof as of the date of transfer, and the particular assets to be transferred shall be determined by joint action of the Board of Trustees of the Winston-Salem Firemen's Relief Fund and the Board of Trustees of the Winston-Salem Firemen's Retirement Fund Association. All property of the Association is hereby relieved from any and all claims of the persons entitled to relief from the Winston-Salem Firemen's Relief Fund. The North Carolina Firemen's Association, its officers, members, boards and committees, are also hereby relieved of any claim of any kind whatsoever which may be based on past service, present service or future service in the Winston-Salem Fire Department. The Winston-Salem Firemen's Relief Fund and the officers, members, boards and committees of said Fund, are also hereby relieved of any claim of any kind whatsoever which may be based on past, present or future service in the Winston-Salem Fire Department, if any, so long as any claimant is entitled to benefits or pension under the provisions of this act.

Sec. 16. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) immediately following, if a person who shall not be a member of the Association shall be transferred to the employment of the Fire Department from the employment of the City of Winston-Salem (hereinafter referred to as the City), the following provisions shall apply in determining whether he shall be a member of the Association following such transfer:

- (1) If he shall have attained at least his 18th birthday and shall not have attained his 40th birthday on the date of such transfer, he shall automatically become a member on such date of transfer. In determining such transferred employee's number of years of continuous employment by the City, employment with the City prior to such transfer shall be taken into account only if such employee shall elect to contribute to the Association the amount of twelve dollars

(\$12.00) per month from the date of his hire by the City until the date of such transfer, plus interest at the rate of seven percent (7%) per annum, computed on the amount accrued as of the end of each fiscal year of the Association.

- (2) If he shall have attained at least his 40th birthday on the date of transfer, but had not attained such birthday when last employed by the City, he may elect within 90 days following such transfer to become a member. If he elects to become a member, he shall contribute to the Association the amount he would have contributed if he had become a member on the day next preceding his 40th birthday. In addition, at the option of such employee, he may further elect to contribute such additional amount as he would have contributed prior to his 40th birthday if his employment with the City had been with the Fire Department. Any such contributions shall include interest at the rate of seven percent (7%) per annum, computed on the amount accrued as of the end of each fiscal year of the Association.
- (3) If he shall have attained at least his 40th birthday when last employed by the City, he shall be ineligible to become a member following such transfer.
- (4) The elections specified in subdivisions (1) and (2) hereof shall be made in writing to the Trustees within 90 days following such transfer, and shall be irrevocable when made (subject to termination of membership upon subsequent separation from employment with the Fire Department). Any contributions (and interest) payable pursuant to such election shall be paid in cash in a lump sum at the time such election shall be filed.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of Section 2 hereof, as soon as practicable following April 3, 1979, (but in no event more than 60 days thereafter), the Trustees gave each person who was then employed by the City of Winston-Salem as a Public Safety Officer an election to be a member or not to be a member of the Association. Each such election was to be made in accordance with procedures established by the Trustees and was irrevocable when made (subject to termination of membership upon a subsequent separation from the employment of the City, and subject to the provisions of subsection (a) of this Section 16). If a Public Safety Officer failed to file a timely election, he was deemed to have elected not to be a member. If a Public Safety Officer who was a member on the date of the election elected to discontinue membership (or shall have been deemed to have so elected), within 30 days following such date there should have been refunded to him the full amount of his prior contributions to the Association, if any, without interest. If a Public Safety Officer who failed to make contributions prior to the election date elected to be a member, he shall have within 30 days following such election paid to the Association the full amount he would have contributed if he had made required contributions during the entire period that he was eligible to be a member. Such contributions included interest at the rate of

six percent (6%) per annum, computed on the amount accrued as of the end of each fiscal year of the Association.

(c) Any member whose employment by the Fire Department as a Public Safety Officer shall be terminated on or after June 27, 1981, for any reason, including transfer to another department in the employment of the City, shall be terminated immediately as a member; provided, that any member who is transferred on or after July 1, 1981, to another department of the City in a fire-related job shall not become a terminated member if the following conditions are met: (i) within 15 days following the date of such transfer he shall file with the Trustees a written election to continue as a member; and (ii) such member shall be notified in writing by the secretary of the Association on or before the date of transfer of his right to make the election. If a terminated member shall reenter employment of the Fire Department, his eligibility to become a member shall be determined at that time in accordance with Section 2 hereof, except to the extent such individual may be entitled to elect to become a member upon a transfer of employment as provided in subsection (a) of this Section 16.

(d) In determining the number of years of continuous employment of a member, there shall be taken into account all years for which he shall make contributions in accordance with subsection (a) or (e) of this Section 16 or Section 19.

(e) If any member of the Association was employed by the Fire Department as a cadet, such member's number of years of employment as a cadet may be added to the period of his continuous employment with the City if, by July 31, 1981, such member contributed to the Association an amount equal to twelve dollars (\$12.00) per month for the time he was a cadet, plus interest at the rate of six percent (6%) per annum, computed on the amount accrued as of the end of each fiscal year of the Association.

(f) If a member has been employed by the City continuously for a period of 10 years and has any military service, and is not otherwise treated under Section 26 as being in the employment of the City during the period of such military service, the period of such military service shall nevertheless be added to his period of continuous employment with the City upon such member's paying to the Association an amount equal to twelve dollars (\$12.00) for each month of such military service plus interest at the rate of seven percent (7%) per annum, compounded annually. Such military service shall be limited to the initial period of active duty in the armed forces of the United States up to the time the member was first eligible to be separated or released therefrom, and subsequent periods of such active duty as required by the armed forces of the United States up to the date of first eligibility for separation or release therefrom. The member must submit evidence satisfactory to the Trustees of the military service claimed. Such election must be made within one year after the member first becomes eligible to contribute for such military service. Credit for military service under this subsection shall not be considered service creditable under another retirement system for purposes of G.S. 128-26(a).

Sec. 17. The Treasurer of the City shall make a monthly deduction from the salary of each member of the Association (except for members in the employ of the Police Department) due him by the City in the amount directed in writing by the Trustees, not to exceed twelve dollars (\$12.00) per month, and the amount so deducted shall be

turned over monthly by the said Treasurer to the custodian of the Association as hereinbefore provided, and the Association shall have the authority to accept donations from any and all sources whatsoever.

Sec. 18. If at any time there shall not be sufficient assets in the retirement fund of the Association to pay fully the persons entitled to benefits provided herein, such persons shall be paid such benefits on a pro rata basis to the extent the assets of such fund will allow, as shall be determined by the Trustees; provided, that the assets of such fund determined as of the close of any fiscal year of the Association shall in no event be less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000).

Sec. 19. Whenever any member of the Association has been employed by the City continuously for a period off at least 30 years, such member may make written application to the trustees for his normal retirement benefit, and whenever any member of the Association has been employed by the City continuously for a period of at least 25 years but not more than 30 years, such member may make written application to the Trustees for his early retirement benefit; provided, however, that such member must retire from the service of the City to receive such benefits. The normal and early retirement benefits of such member shall be a monthly pension for the remainder of his life, as provided hereinbelow. For this purpose and for the purpose of Section 20 hereof, a member shall be deemed to have been employed by the City continuously if such member shall have been employed continuously by any combination of the Fire Department or Police Department (but only such employment by the Police Department as is described in subsection 16(b) and (c) hereof), and the transfer of a member from the employ of one of such organizations to the employ of the other such organization shall not be deemed to be a termination of employment by the City. Provided, that if a member has at least 25 years of employment with the City, but such service is not continuous solely because of a leave of absence lasting not more than a year and not described in Section 26, such member shall be deemed to have continuous employment with the City during such leave of absence; and provided further, that if a member has less than 25 years of employment with the City but the sum of his years of employment with the City plus

any leave of absence lasting not more than one year and not described in Section 26, equals or exceeds 25 years, the period of such leave shall be deemed to be continuous employment with the City if such member contributes to the Association twelve dollars (\$12.00) for each month he was on such leave, plus interest at the rate of seven percent (7%) per annum, computed on the amount accrued as of the end of each fiscal year of the Association.

The amount of the monthly pension for each member who is entitled to receive a normal retirement benefit and who retires on or after July 1, 1985, shall be one hundred eighty-five dollars (\$185.00). The amount of the monthly pension for each member who is entitled to receive an early retirement benefit and who retires on and after July 1, 1985, shall be the product of (1) and (2), where (1) is the applicable percentage listed in the following table based on his years of continuous employment at his early retirement date, and (2) is one hundred eighty-five dollars (\$185.00):

Years of Employment at	Percentage of Normal
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<u>Retirement Date</u>	<u>Retirement Benefit</u>
25	85%
26	88%
27	91%
28	94%
29	97%

Payment shall be subject to the provisions of Section 18 of this act.

Sec. 20. Whenever any member of the Association becomes totally and permanently unable, because of infirmity or disease affecting mind or body (whether or not induced by injury) to perform his duties for the City, which inability shall be determined by a medical examination by a physician or physicians of good standing and repute selected by the Trustees, he shall be deemed to be a disabled member. If a disabled member has been employed by the City for at least five full years prior to suffering disability, he shall be entitled to retire and receive a monthly benefit payable for the remainder of his life.

In the case of such a member who retires as a disabled member on or after July 1, 1985, his monthly benefit shall equal seven dollars forty cents (\$7.40) times his years of service, but not to exceed one hundred eighty-five dollars (\$185.00). For this purpose only, years of service shall mean the number of full years of his service in the employment of the City. Payments shall be subject to the provisions of Section 18 of this act.

Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this Section 20, in the case of a disabled member whose disability shall arise out of injuries incurred in fire safety activities, such as fire fighting, fire training and fire inspection, such monthly benefit shall in no event be less than forty dollars (\$40.00) per month, whether or not such disabled member was employed by the City for at least five years prior to suffering such disability. The determination of whether such disability arises out of injuries incurred in fire safety activities shall be made by the Trustees.

Sec. 21. Any disabled member of the Association who retires under Section 19 hereof and who had not been employed by the City for a period of at least 30 years prior to retirement, shall be subject to call by the Trustees for reexamination by a physician of good standing and repute selected by the Trustees and, if based upon such examination it is determined by the Trustees that such member is able to perform active duties for the City, such member may be reinstated and receive for his services the same compensation paid to other employees of the City of his rank or classification. If such member, upon being called by the Trustees, shall refuse to submit to an examination or shall refuse to be reinstated to active duty in the employ of the City after being found to be able to perform active duty, such benefits as he is then receiving under the provisions of this act shall immediately terminate and his membership in this Association shall automatically terminate. But in the event that such member is physically unable to resume active employment, or in the event he is able and willing to resume active employment but no job with the City is open for him at such time, his pension or compensation shall continue until there shall be an opening for such member and he is reemployed by the City. For the purpose of this Section 21, employment with the City

shall mean only employment with the Fire Department or Police Department (but employment with the Police Department shall be included only with regard to any such member who was employed with the Police Department prior to his retirement under Section 20 hereof).

Sec. 22. When any member of the Association shall resign or be dismissed from employment by the City (which for this purpose shall include only employment with the Fire Department or Police Department), he shall receive a sum of money equal to all monies paid into the Association by him. Upon the death of any member of the Association while in the employment of the City, a sum of money equal to all monies paid into the Association by such deceased member shall be paid to the beneficiary or beneficiaries designated in writing by such deceased member, or in default thereof, to his estate. If, after retirement, a member of the Association shall die before having received an amount equal to his contributions to the Association, there shall be paid to the beneficiary or beneficiaries designated by such member, or in default thereof to his estate, an amount equal to his contributions less the sum of retirement benefits paid to such member. The reimbursements provided in this Section 22 shall be in cash in a lump sum, unless otherwise determined by the Trustees with the consent in writing of the recipient thereof less interest, if any, previously contributed to the Association by the member pursuant to Section 16 or Section 19.

Sec. 23. No amount payable or held by the Association under this act for the benefit of any member or beneficiary thereof shall be subject in any manner to anticipation, alienation, sale, transfer, assignment, pledge, encumbrance or charge, nor shall any amount payable or held under this act for the benefit of any member or beneficiary thereof be in anywise liable for his debts, contracts, liabilities, engagements, or torts, nor be subject to any legal process to levy upon or attach, but the provisions of this Section 22 shall not be applicable as regards any dealings with or obligations to the Winston-Salem Firemen's Credit Union.

Sec. 24. Out of the amount paid to the Insurance Commissioner of the State of North Carolina upon the amount of all premiums on fire and lightning policies covering property situated in the corporate limits of the City, the Insurance Commissioner of the State of North Carolina shall pay annually to the Treasurer of the City ninety-five percent (95%), and the Treasurer of the City shall immediately pay over the same to the treasurer of the Association, or if the treasurer of the Association shall so direct, the Treasurer of the City shall pay such amount directly to the custodian.

Sec. 25. No member of this Association or Trustee shall be personally liable in any manner whatsoever to any person, association, firm or corporation by reason of his connection with, or act or acts on behalf of, said Association, unless such act or acts are fraudulently committed.

Sec. 26. If a member of the Association, or an employee of the Fire Department or Police Department who is not a member of the Association due to failure to meet the minimum age requirements of subsection 2(b) hereof, is granted a leave of absence from employment by the City on account of accidental injury or temporary illness, military service during time of active warfare, compulsory military service in time of peace, or other good cause, for the purpose of this act such employee shall be deemed to have

remained in the employment of the City during the period of such leave of absence or any extension thereof if he shall return to active service with the City promptly following the end of the period of such leave of absence or extension thereof. During such leave of absence or extension thereof, the Treasurer of the City shall make no deductions from the salary, if any, of such member, and such member shall not otherwise be required to make any contributions to the Association during or with respect to such period.

Sec. 27. If any person entitled to benefits under this act shall be physically or mentally incapable of receiving or acknowledging receipt of such benefits, the Trustees, upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of such incapacity and that another person or institution is maintaining such person entitled to benefits, and that no guardian or committee has been appointed for him, may cause any benefits otherwise payable to him to be made to such person or institution so maintaining him.

Sec. 28. The provisions of this act shall be administered on an equitable and nondiscriminatory basis, it being the intent hereof that where the Trustees are given discretionary powers, such powers shall be exercised in an equitable manner and so as to prevent discrimination between persons similarly situated. All assets of the Association shall be administered for the exclusive benefit of the members of the Association and their beneficiaries, and as a fund to provide for such members or beneficiaries the benefits provided in this act. It shall be impossible for any part of the principal or income of the retirement fund of the Association to be used for or diverted to purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of the members of the Association or their beneficiaries as provided in this act; except that the Trustees may use such assets to pay the reasonable expenses incurred in administering the said fund and any debts, liabilities or obligations of said fund. The assets and income of the fund shall be exempt from all taxes, including income taxes, imposed by the State of North Carolina or any political subdivision thereof.

Sec. 29. The fiscal year of the Association shall end on June 30 of each year.

Sec. 30. Throughout this act, use of the masculine pronoun shall include the feminine.

Sec. 31. If any part or section of this act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid by the Supreme Court of North Carolina or any other court of last resort of competent jurisdiction it shall in no wise affect the remainder of this act, and the remainder shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 32. All the laws and clauses of laws in conflict with the provisions of this act are hereby repealed."

Sec. 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 1987.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 29th day of June, 1987.