

Article 12F.

Separate Insurance Benefits Plan for State and Local Governmental Law-Enforcement Officers.

§ 143-166.60. Separate insurance benefits plan for law-enforcement officers.

(a) A Separate Insurance Benefits Plan, hereinafter called the "Plan", is to be an employee welfare benefit plan, established for the benefit of (i) all law enforcement officers, as defined in G.S. 135-1(11c) and G.S. 128-21(11d) employed by the State and local governments and (ii) all former law-enforcement officers previously employed by the State and local governments, who had 20 or more years of service as an officer or are in receipt of a disability retirement allowance from any State-administered retirement system or are in receipt of a benefit from the Disability Income Plan of North Carolina, who shall be participants.

(b) The Boards of Trustees of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System and the Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System shall jointly administer the Plan and shall, under the terms and conditions otherwise appearing in this Article, provide Plan benefits either (i) by establishing a separate trust fund or, (ii) by causing the Plan to affiliate with a master trust, the North Carolina Teachers' and State Employees' Benefits Trust, providing the same benefits for participants. Employer and non-employer contributions to the Benefit Trust and earnings on those contributions are irrevocable. The assets of the Benefit Trust are dedicated to providing benefits to participants, surviving spouses, participants' estates, and persons named by the participant to receive the benefit. The assets of the Benefit Trust are not subject to the claims of creditors of the employees and non-employees making contributions to the Benefit Trust, are not subject to the claims of any creditors of the Benefit Trust's trustees and administrators, and are not subject to the claims of creditors of participants. Benefit Trust assets may be used for reasonable expenses to administer benefits provided by the Fund as approved by the Board of Trustees.

(c) The initial assets of the Plan are the assets of the former Separate Benefit Plan established under G.S. 143-166.04 as it existed prior to January 1, 1986, which shall be transferred to the Plan on January 1, 1986. The Plan shall be separate and apart from any retirement systems or plans.

(d) The Boards of Trustees shall promulgate rules and regulations as are necessary to establish benefits under the Plan, within the availability of funds, to provide:

- (1) Repealed by Session Laws 2020-48, s. 5.1, effective June 26, 2020.
- (2) A group life insurance benefit for participants employed by an employer at the time of death, not to exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000);
- (3) A group life insurance benefit for participants who are eligible former officers, not to exceed four thousand dollars (\$4,000); and
- (4) An accidental line-of-duty insurance death benefit not to exceed two thousand one hundred dollars (\$2,100) in total on account of the death of a participant caused by an accident while in the actual performance of duty as an officer.

(d1) In addition to the benefits provided under subsection (d) of this section, the assets of the Plan may be used to pay the employer health insurance contributions and contribution rates on behalf of law enforcement officers, as defined in G.S. 135-1(11c), employed by the State and former law enforcement officers receiving a retirement allowance from the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System.

(e) The insurance benefit of the Plan on account of the death of a participant shall be payable 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 the participant does not wish these benefits to be paid to his or her spouse or estate, then the benefits shall be paid to the person or persons as the participant may name for this purpose. The life insurance benefits shall be payable only on account of participants in the Plan for six or more months or, if an actively employed officer, at any time after employment if death results from an accident.

(f) Should amounts in the trust fund of the Plan be insufficient at any time to enable the Boards of Trustees to pay benefits due in full, then an equitable graded percentage of the payment shall be made.

(g) The provisions of the State and Local Retirement Systems pertaining to administration and management of funds under G.S. 128-28, G.S. 128-29, G.S. 135-6 and G.S. 135-7 are made applicable to the Plan.

(h) Exemption from Garnishment and Attachment. – The right of a participant in the Separate Insurance Benefits Plan to the benefits provided under this Article is nonforfeitable and exempt from levy, sale, and garnishment. (1985, c. 479, s. 196(t); 1987, c. 738, s. 29(p); 1989, c. 792, s. 2.8; 2003-284, s. 30.19B(b); 2013-360, s. 35.17(a); 2014-97, s. 9; 2017-129, s. 2(v); 2020-48, s. 5.1; 2022-16, s. 4.4.)