



Date: February 12, 2026
To: PERA Board of Trustees
From: Doug Anderson, Executive Director
Amy Strenge, Policy Coordinator
Subject: 2026 PERA Legislative Agenda

The 2026 legislative session begins on February 17, 2026. In preparation for the 2026 session, staff developed proposed changes for the Statewide Volunteer Firefighter (SVF) Advisory Board to consider. The Advisory Board considered staff's proposed changes and recommend the changes for inclusion in the 2026 PERA legislative initiatives.

Background

The policy-making, management, and administrative functions related to the SVF Plan are vested in the board of trustees and the executive director of the Public Employees Retirement Association. Their duties, authority, and responsibilities are as provided in section 353.03. Fiduciary activities of the plan and fund must be undertaken in a manner consistent with chapter 356A. The SVF Advisory Board provides advice and guidance to the PERA Board of Trustees in matters relating to the SVF.

Since 2010 the legislature has increased options within the SVF (ex. multiple vesting schedules) and opportunity to join (i.e. the incentive program). Increased plan membership has resulted in a much larger number of unique scenarios and administrative challenges. PERA staff is committed to an administrative approach to maximize operational efficiency. The commitment to being operationally efficient means that we must streamline our work and minimize time spent on unique situations. We also expect our membership to do their part to achieve operational efficiency. Our commitment is intended ultimately to provide services at the lowest possible cost. Lower costs means more money for retirement benefits for the volunteers and lower governing body contributions.

Throughout the past couple years staff have identified both legislative changes and internal administration changes to align with the operational efficient mission. At its January 20 meeting the SVF Advisory Board unanimously supported internal administrative changes and legislative recommendations. This memo focuses on the legislative recommendations for the PERA Board to consider. The changes can be categorized into three areas: deadlines & consequences, administrative changes that require legislation, and policy changes.

Deadlines and Consequences

The first category addresses deadlines and consequences for participation in the SVF Plan. Current statute does not provide sufficient deadlines to administer various aspects of the SVF Plan.

The recommended legislation provides for deadlines relating to transfer of coverage, benefit increases, and termination of participation of benefits. If an entity fails to meet the applicable deadline, the entity cannot complete the action, and may meet the deadline the next calendar year.

Administrative Changes

The SVF Advisory Board considered administrative changes that require statutory language to accomplish. The changes clarify various definitions, selection of benefit levels, defined contribution plan processes, funding reports requirements, authorized disbursements, cost analysis, and allows for proxy participation for the SVF Advisory Board.

Policy Changes

The SVF Advisory Board considered two policy proposals relating to SVF participation. The SVF Advisory Board recommended that given the complexity of administering monthly plans, monthly plans will no longer be allowed to join the SVF. The SVF Advisory Board also recommended that Defined Contribution plans within the SVF plans cannot convert to a Defined Benefit plan given that there is no mechanism for conversion.

Staff Recommendation:

PERA Staff recommends that the PERA Board of Trustees direct staff to seek legislation incorporating the SVF Advisory Board recommendations.