STATE OF NEW YORK

1424

2017-2018 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 9, 2017

Introduced by Sen. AVELLA -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Civil Service and Pensions

AN ACT establishing a temporary task force on variable supplements fund

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative intent. The variable supplements fund (VSF) program was enacted in 1970 to provide supplementation to the retirement allowance of New York city police and fire retirement system members. Since the enactment of the legislation establishing the VSF program, much controversy has been generated by the exclusion of disability retirees from eligibility for the benefit. Although a small number of New York city disability retirees were permitted to receive VSF supplementation benefits as a result of technical correction legislation approved during previous years, the lack of clarity in defining VSF eligibility and the continued exclusion of most disabled firefighters from receipt of this benefit has been a cause of much frustration and confusion for disability pensioners.

While it is recognized that any amendment to the VSF will require careful study and consideration of the issues involved, the legislature's interest in ensuring fairness and equity demand such review. Because the legislature does not accept this responsibility lightly, it hereby declares that the establishment of a temporary task force, to be known as the temporary task force on the variable supplements fund, is both warranted and required.

§ 2. 1. A temporary task force, to be known as the temporary task force on the variable supplements fund, is hereby created to examine and investigate such issues as are related to the exclusion of disability pensioners from the VSF.

2. The temporary task force shall have the power to:

(a) conduct public hearings in furtherance of the performance of its duties under this act;

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(b) issue subpoenas for and to compel attendance of witnesses and the production of books, records, documents and other relevant evidence; and

(c) to recommend legislation consistent with the purposes of this section.

3. The task force shall consist of seven members appointed by the governor as follows:

(a) one member appointed on the recommendation of the temporary president of the senate;

(b) one member appointed on the recommendation of the speaker of the assembly;

(c) one member appointed on the recommendation of the minority leader of the senate;

(d) one member appointed on the recommendation of the minority leader of the assembly;

(e) one member appointed on the recommendation of the mayor of the city of New York;

(f) one member appointed on the recommendation of the state comptroller; and

(g) one member who shall represent the interest of the affected disability retirees and who shall be designated by the chair.

From among such seven members, the governor shall designate the chair. In addition to such seven voting members, the president of the uniformed firefighters association of greater New York or his or her designee and the comptroller of the city of New York or his or her designee shall serve as non-voting members. Four voting members of the temporary task force shall, at all times, constitute a quorum. Members shall receive no compensation for their services; members (including non-voting members) who are not governmental employees shall be reimbursed for their reasonable expenses incurred during the performance of their duties. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provision of any general, special or local law, no officer or employee of the state or of any political subdivision thereof shall forfeit his or her office or employment by reason of acceptance of appointment to the temporary task force.

4. Within one year of the effective date of this act, the temporary task force shall issue a report containing such findings and recommendations regarding the eligibility of disability pensioners of New York city to receive supplemental payments from the VSF and any other matters relating thereto. Such report shall be transmitted to the governor, the comptroller, the chair of the Senate civil service and pensions committee and the chair of the assembly governmental employees committee.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.