

2027 PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATOR RETIREMENT BILL

Presented by the NM 911 Directors Affiliate

October 13, 2026



RECOGNIZING
PUBLIC SAFETY
TELECOMMUNICATORS
AS PUBLIC SAFETY
PROFESSIONALS

- *2027 New Mexico Legislative Session*
- *Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs)*
- *Inclusion of PSTs in public safety retirement coverage*

The 2027 discussion draft includes PSTs under the PERA police members plan and establishes an election process for current PSTs.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS ARE FIRST RESPONDERS

- Every emergency begins with a request for help.
- The PST is often the first public safety professional involved.
- PSTs:
 - Answer 911 calls
 - Gather critical information
 - Assess emergencies
 - Dispatch appropriate resources
 - Coordinate multiple responding agencies
 - Provide lifesaving pre-arrival instructions
- PSTs are an essential component of the public safety response.

The question is not whether PSTs perform public safety work.

The question is whether our retirement system recognizes the work they already perform.



THE CURRENT PROBLEM

A CLASSIFICATION THAT
DOES NOT REFLECT THE
PROFESSION

- Public Safety Telecommunicators perform mission-critical emergency response functions.
- However, PSTs are generally classified under PERA general member plans rather than public safety plans.
- This creates a disconnect between:
 - The responsibilities of the profession
 - The risks associated with the profession
 - The retirement classification assigned to the profession

WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?

A SIMPLE LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

The bill amends the Public Employees Retirement Act to:

- *Include a public safety telecommunicator employed by an affiliated public employer as a municipal police member.*
- *Include a public safety telecommunicator employed by the State as a state police member.*
- *Establish an election process concerning the applicable public safety coverage plans for current PSTs.*

The bill specifically added PSTs to both the municipal police member and state police member definitions.



WHAT IS NOT CHANGING?

This Bill Is Targeted

- It does not create a new retirement system.
- It does not change the responsibilities of PSTs.
- It does not change PST certification or training.
- It does not change how 911 centers operate.

It simply places Public Safety Telecommunicators within the appropriate existing public safety retirement structure.

THE HUMAN COST OF THE PROFESSION

PSTs Experience the Emergency – Without Leaving the Communications Center

- Repeated exposure to traumatic events
- Death and serious injury
- Calls involving children
- Suicidal callers
- Family members experiencing unimaginable emergencies
- Critical incidents involving law enforcement and fire personnel
- Cumulative stress from years of exposure

The absence of physical presence at the scene does not eliminate the emotional impact of the emergency.



RECRUITMENT
& RETENTION

RECOGNIZING PSTS
SUPPORTS THE WORKFORCE

Public safety retirement recognition has the potential to:

- Improve recruitment
- Improve retention
- Support career longevity
- Reduce staffing instability
- Preserve experienced personnel
- Strengthen succession planning
- Recognize the specialized nature of emergency communications as an essential public safety service

PERA's analysis identified potential **recruitment, retention, wellness and succession benefits** associated with aligning retirement recognition with the public safety role of PSTs.

THE FINANCIAL QUESTION

WHAT WILL THIS COST?

PERA's June 30, 2025 analysis estimated:

- *Approximately \$19.97 million increase in unfunded liability (UAAL)*
- *PERA funded ratio remains at 65.2%*
- *Approx. \$6.41 million increase in actuarially determined contribution (ADC) annually*
- *Approx. \$6.77 million increase in anticipated contributions annually*
- *No change in the 50-year amortization period*

WHY THE INVESTMENT
MATTERS

THE COST OF TURNOVER IS
MORE THAN FINANCIAL

When experienced PSTs leave:

- *Agencies lose institutional knowledge.*
- *Training investments leave with the employee.*
- *Remaining staff absorb additional workload.*
- *Recruitment becomes more difficult.*
- *Training pipelines become longer.*
- *Staffing instability affects the entire public safety system.*

Retaining experienced PSTs strengthens the entire emergency response system.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
CONSIDERATIONS

AN INVESTMENT IN THE
PUBLIC SAFETY
WORKFORCE

Local governments may experience:

- Higher employer contribution obligations
- Increased public safety retirement contributions

But potentially also:

- Reduced turnover
- Improved recruitment
- Improved retention
- Greater staffing stability
- Reduced loss of experienced PSTs
- Greater stabilized field responder safety

PERA's analysis specifically recognizes both the potential increase in local contribution obligations and potential workforce benefits.



A STATEWIDE ISSUE

THIS IS BIGGER THAN ONE
AGENCY OR ONE COUNTY

Public Safety Telecommunicators serve:

- Municipalities
- Counties
- State agencies
- Rural communities
- Metropolitan areas

Every community depends on trained PSTs to access emergency services.

This legislation recognizes PSTs statewide.

*88% of 33 New Mexico Counties have formally recognized PSTs as First Responders

A NATIONWIDE EFFORT

U.S. SENATE BILL 725

Enhancing First Response Act (S.725) reclassifies Public Safety Telecommunicators as “Protective Service” in the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Standard Occupational Classification System (SOCS).

- The Senate passed S.725 unanimously in September 2025 and is awaiting House approval.
- S.725 is a companion bill to H.R.637 in the House.



THE FIRST, FIRST RESPONDER

Every emergency response begins with a voice.

That voice belongs to a Public Safety Telecommunicator.

It's time for New Mexico's retirement system to recognize the profession they are.

ONE MISSION.
PSTS ARE PART OF THE
PUBLIC SAFETY TEAM

- Law Enforcement
- Fire
- EMS
- Public Safety Telecommunications

All share the same mission:

Protect Life. Protect Property. Serve the Public.

The retirement system should recognize the PST's place within that team.

SUPPORT THE 2027 PST RETIREMENT BILL

We are asking New Mexico legislators to:

- *Recognize Public Safety Telecommunicators as public safety professionals.*
- *Support their inclusion in appropriate public safety retirement coverage.*
- *Support recruitment and retention of an essential public safety workforce.*
- *Recognize the unique responsibilities and demands of the profession.*
- *Support the continued strengthening of New Mexico's 911 system.*



Q&A

