

CHAPTER 68**(HB 358)**

AN ACT relating to assignment of death benefits.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔Section 1. KRS 61.705 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) Upon the death of a retired member of the Kentucky Employees Retirement System, County Employees Retirement System, or State Police Retirement System who was receiving a monthly retirement allowance based on a minimum of forty-eight (48) months of service or whose retirement allowance based on a minimum of forty-eight (48) months was suspended in accordance with KRS 61.637, a death benefit of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) shall be paid. If the retired member had more than one (1) account in the Kentucky Employees Retirement System, County Employees Retirement System, or State Police Retirement System, the system shall pay only one (1) five thousand dollar (\$5,000) death benefit. Application for the death benefit made to the Kentucky Retirement Systems shall include acceptable evidence of death and of the eligibility of the applicant to act on the deceased retired member's behalf.
- (2) The death benefit shall be paid to a beneficiary named by the retired member. Upon retirement or any time thereafter, the retired member may designate on the form prescribed by the board, death benefit designation, a person, the retired member's estate, a trust or trustee, or a licensed funeral home, as the beneficiary of the death benefit. The beneficiary for the death benefit may or may not be the same beneficiary designated in accordance with KRS 61.590(1). If the beneficiary designated under this section is a person and that person dies prior to the member, or if the beneficiary was the retired member's spouse and they were divorced on the date of the retired member's death, then the retired member's estate shall become the beneficiary, unless the retired member has filed a subsequent death benefit designation. If a licensed funeral home is designated as beneficiary and the licensed funeral home cannot be reasonably identified or located by Kentucky Retirement Systems at the time of the retired member's death, then the retired member's estate shall become the beneficiary of the death benefit.
- (3) If, at the time of the retired member's death, a debt to the Kentucky Retirement Systems remains on his or her account, the balance owed shall be deducted from the five thousand dollars (\$5,000) death benefit.
- (4) ***Upon the death of a retired member, the death benefit provided pursuant to this section may be assigned by the designated beneficiary to a bank or licensed funeral home.***

➔Section 2. KRS 161.655 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) Effective July 1, 2000, the Teachers' Retirement System shall:
 - (a) Provide a life insurance benefit in a minimum amount of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for its members who are retired for service or disability. This life insurance benefit shall be payable upon the death of a member retired for service or disability to the member's estate or to a party designated by the member on a form prescribed by the retirement system; and
 - (b) Provide a life insurance benefit in a minimum amount of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) for its active contributing members. This life insurance benefit shall be payable upon the death of an active contributing member to the member's estate or to a party designated by the member on a form prescribed by the retirement system.
- (2) The member may name one (1) primary and one (1) contingent beneficiary for receipt of the life insurance benefit. To the extent permitted by the Internal Revenue Code, a trust may be designated as beneficiary for receipt of the life insurance benefit. Members may designate as beneficiaries only presently identifiable and existing individuals, or trusts where otherwise permitted, without contingency instructions, on forms prescribed by the retirement system. In the event that a member fails to designate a beneficiary, or all designated beneficiaries predecease the member, the member's estate shall be deemed to be the beneficiary. Any beneficiary designation made by the member, including the estate should the estate become the beneficiary by default, shall remain in effect until changed by the member on forms prescribed by the retirement system, except in the event of subsequent marriage or divorce. A valid marriage license shall terminate any previously designated beneficiary, even that of a trust, and establish the spouse as beneficiary unless, subsequent proof of the marriage, the member or retired member redesignates someone other than the new spouse as the beneficiary. A final divorce decree shall terminate the beneficiary status of an ex-spouse

unless, subsequent to divorce, the member redesignates the former spouse as a beneficiary. A final divorce decree shall not terminate the designation of a trust as beneficiary regardless of who is designated as beneficiary of the trust.

- (3) Application for payment of life insurance proceeds shall be made to the Teachers' Retirement System together with acceptable evidence of death and eligibility. The reciprocal provisions of KRS 61.680(2)(a) shall not apply to the coverage and payment of proceeds by the life insurance benefit under this section.
- (4) Suit or civil action shall not be required for the collection of the proceeds of the life insurance benefit provided for by this section, but nothing in this section shall prevent the maintenance of suit or civil action against the beneficiary or legal representative receiving the proceeds of the life insurance benefit.
- (5) ***Upon the death of a member of the Teachers' Retirement System, the life insurance provided pursuant to subsection (1) of this section may be assigned by the designated beneficiary to a bank or licensed funeral home.***

➔Section 3. KRS 61.690 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) Except as otherwise provided by this section ***and subsection (4) of Section 1 of this Act***, all retirement allowances and other benefits accrued or accruing to any person under the provisions of KRS 61.510 to 61.705, 16.505 to 16.652, and 78.510 to 78.852, and the accumulated contributions and cash securities in the funds created under KRS 61.510 to 61.705, 16.505 to 16.652, and 78.510 to 78.852, are hereby exempt from any state, county, or municipal tax, and shall not be subject to execution, attachment, garnishment, or any other process, and shall not be assigned.
- (2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (1) of this section, retirement benefits accrued or accruing to any person under the provisions of KRS 61.510 to 61.705, 16.505 to 16.652, and 78.510 to 78.852 on or after January 1, 1998, shall be subject to the tax imposed by KRS 141.020, to the extent provided in KRS 141.010 and 141.0215.
- (3) Qualified domestic relations orders issued by a court or administrative agency shall be honored by the retirement system if:
 - (a) The benefits payable pursuant to the order meet the requirements of a qualified domestic relations order as provided by 26 U.S.C. sec. 414(p). The retirement system shall follow applicable provisions of 26 U.S.C. sec. 414(p) in administering qualified domestic relations orders;
 - (b) The order meets the requirements established by the retirement system and by subsections (3) to (11) of this section. The board of trustees of the retirement system shall establish the requirements, procedures, and forms necessary for the administration of qualified domestic relations orders by promulgation of administrative regulations in accordance with KRS Chapter 13A; and
 - (c) The order is on the form established by the retirement system pursuant to the retirement system's authority provided under paragraph (3)(b) of this subsection.
- (4) A qualified domestic relations order shall not:
 - (a) Require the retirement system to take any action not authorized under state or federal law;
 - (b) Require the retirement system to provide any benefit, allowance, or other payment not authorized under state or federal law;
 - (c) Grant or be construed to grant the alternate payee any separate right, title, or interest in or to any retirement benefit other than to receive payments from the participant's account in accordance with the administrative regulations promulgated by the retirement system and as provided by subsections (3) to (11) of this section; or
 - (d) Grant any separate interest to any person other than the participant.
- (5) Any qualified domestic relations order submitted to the retirement system shall specify the dollar amount or percentage amount of the participant's benefit to be paid to the alternate payee. In calculating the amount to be paid to the alternate payee, the court or administrative agency that is responsible for issuing the order shall follow the requirements set forth in the administrative regulations promulgated by the board of trustees. Notwithstanding any other statute to the contrary, the board shall not be required to honor a qualified domestic relations order that does not follow the requirements set forth in the administrative regulations promulgated by the board of trustees.

- (6) If the qualified domestic relations order meets the requirements established by the system and by subsections (3) to (11) of this section, payments to the alternate payee shall begin under the following conditions:
- (a) If the participant is retired and is receiving a monthly benefit, the month following the date the retirement system receives a qualified domestic relations order that complies with the administrative regulations promulgated by the retirement system and subsections (3) to (11) of this section; or
 - (b) If the participant is not retired, the month of the participant's effective retirement date in which the first retirement allowance is payable to the participant or the month in which the participant receives a refund of contributions as provided by KRS 61.625.
- (7) An alternate payee's benefits and rights under a qualified domestic relations order shall terminate upon the earlier of:
- (a) The death of the participant;
 - (b) The death of the alternate payee; or
 - (c) The termination of the participant's benefits under any of the provisions of KRS 16.505 to 16.652, 61.510 to 61.705, and 78.510 to 78.852.
- (8) An alternate payee shall not receive a monthly payment under a qualified domestic relations order if the participant is not receiving a monthly retirement allowance.
- (9) The cost of living adjustment provided to the participant pursuant to KRS 61.691 shall be divided between the participant and alternate payee in a qualified domestic relations order as follows:
- (a) If the order specifies the alternate payee is to receive a percentage of the participant's benefit, then the cost of living adjustment shall be divided between the participant and the alternate payee based upon the percentage of the total benefit each is receiving upon the participant's retirement or upon the date the order is approved by the retirement system, whichever is later; or
 - (b) If the order specifies that the alternate payee is to receive a set dollar amount of the participant's benefit, then the order shall specify that:
 1. The cost of living adjustment shall be divided between the participant and the alternate payee based upon the percentage of the total benefit each is receiving upon the participant's retirement or upon the date the order is approved by the retirement system, whichever is later; or
 2. The alternate payee shall receive no cost of living adjustment.

If the order does not specify the division of the cost of living adjustment as required by this paragraph, then no cost of living adjustment shall be payable to the alternate payee. If no cost of living adjustment is provided to the alternate payee, then the participant shall receive the full cost of living adjustment he or she would have received if the order had not been applied to the participant's account.
- (10) Except in cases involving child support payments, the retirement system may charge reasonable and necessary fees and expenses to the recipient and the alternate payee of a qualified domestic relations order for the administration of the qualified domestic relations order by the retirement system. All fees and expenses shall be established by administrative regulations promulgated by the board of trustees of the retirement system. The qualified domestic relations order shall specify whether the fees and expenses provided by this subsection shall be paid:
- (a) Solely by the participant;
 - (b) Solely by the alternate payee; or
 - (c) Equally shared by the participant and alternate payee.
- (11) The retirement system shall honor a qualified domestic relations order issued prior to July 15, 2010, if:
- (a) The order was on file and approved by the retirement system prior to July 15, 2010. All benefits, including cost of living adjustments payable to the alternate payee, for orders that meet the requirements of this paragraph shall not be eliminated or reduced as a result of the provisions of subsections (3) to (10) of this section and KRS 61.510(27) and 78.510(26); or
 - (b) The order or an amended version of the order meets the requirements established by this section and the administrative regulations promulgated by the retirement system. The order shall not apply to benefit

payments issued by the retirement system prior to the date the order was approved by the retirement system.

➔Section 4. KRS 161.700 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) Except as otherwise provided by this section *and subsection (5) of Section 2 of this Act*, the right of a member to a retirement allowance and to the return of contributions, any benefit or right accrued or accruing to any person under KRS 161.220 to 161.716, and the money in the various funds established pursuant to KRS 161.220 to 161.716 are hereby exempt from any state or municipal tax, and shall not be subject to execution, garnishment, attachment, or other process, and shall not be assigned.
- (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1) of this section, retirement benefits accrued or accruing to any person under this retirement system on or after January 1, 1998, shall be subject to the tax imposed by KRS 141.020, to the extent provided in KRS 141.010 and 141.0215.
- (3) Retirement allowance, disability allowance, accumulated contributions, or any other benefit under the retirement system shall not be classified as marital property pursuant to KRS 403.190(1), except to the extent permitted under KRS 403.190(4). Retirement allowance, disability allowance, accumulated contributions, or any other benefit under the retirement system shall not be considered as an economic circumstance during the division of marital property in an action for dissolution of marriage pursuant to KRS 403.190(1)(d), except to the extent permitted under KRS 403.190(4).
- (4) Qualified domestic relations orders issued by a court or administrative agency shall be honored by the retirement system if:
 - (a) The benefits payable pursuant to the order meet the requirements of a qualified domestic relations order as provided by 26 U.S.C. sec. 414(p). The retirement system shall follow applicable provisions of 26 U.S.C. sec. 414(p) in administering qualified domestic relations orders;
 - (b) The order meets the requirements established by the retirement system and by subsections (4) to (12) of this section. The board of trustees of the retirement system shall establish the requirements, procedures, and forms necessary for the administration of qualified domestic relations order by promulgation of administrative regulations in accordance with KRS Chapter 13A; and
 - (c) The order is on the form established by the retirement system pursuant to the retirement system's authority provided under paragraph (b) of this subsection.
- (5) A qualified domestic relations order shall not:
 - (a) Require the retirement system to take any action not authorized under state or federal law;
 - (b) Require the retirement system to provide any benefit, allowance, or other payment not authorized under state or federal law;
 - (c) Grant or be construed to grant the alternate payee any separate right, title, or interest in or to any retirement benefit other than to receive payments from the participant's account in accordance with the administrative regulations promulgated by the system and as provided by subsections (4) to (12) of this section; or
 - (d) Grant any separate interest to any person other than the participant.
- (6) Any qualified domestic relations order submitted to the retirement system shall specify the dollar amount or percentage amount of the participant's benefit to be paid to the alternate payee. In calculating the amount to be paid to the alternate payee, the court or administrative agency that is responsible for issuing the order shall follow the requirements set forth in the administrative regulations promulgated by the board of trustees. Notwithstanding any other statute to the contrary, the board shall not be required to honor a qualified domestic relations order that does not follow the requirements set forth in the administrative regulations promulgated by the board of trustees.
- (7) If the qualified domestic relations order meets the requirements established by the system and by subsections (4) to (12) of this section, payments to the alternate payee shall be distributed under the following conditions:
 - (a) If the participant is retired and is receiving a monthly benefit, the month following the date the retirement system receives a qualified domestic relations order that complies with the administrative regulations promulgated by the retirement system and subsections (4) to (12) of this section; or

- (b) If the participant is not retired, the month of the participant's effective retirement date in which the first retirement allowance is payable to the participant or the month in which the participant receives a refund of contributions as provided by KRS 161.470(6).
- (8) An alternate payee's benefits and rights under a qualified domestic relations order shall terminate upon the earlier of:
- (a) The death of the participant;
 - (b) The death of the alternate payee; or
 - (c) The termination of benefits to the participant under any provision of KRS 161.220 to 161.716.
- (9) An alternate payee shall not receive a monthly payment under a qualified domestic relations order if the participant is not receiving a monthly retirement allowance.
- (10) The cost of living adjustment provided to the participant pursuant to KRS 161.620 shall be divided between the participant and alternate payee in a qualified domestic relations order as follows:
- (a) If the order specifies the alternate payee is to receive a percentage of the participant's benefit, then the cost of living adjustment shall be divided between the participant and the alternate payee based upon the percentage of the total benefit each is receiving upon the participant's retirement or upon the date the order is approved by the retirement system, whichever is later; or
 - (b) If the order specifies that the alternate payee is to receive a set dollar amount of the participant's benefit, then the order shall specify that:
 - 1. The cost of living adjustment shall be divided between the participant and the alternate payee based upon the percentage of the total benefit each is receiving upon the participant's retirement or upon the date the order is approved by the retirement system, whichever is later; or
 - 2. The alternate payee shall receive no cost of living adjustment.
- If the order does not specify the division of the cost of living adjustment as required by this paragraph, then no cost of living adjustment shall be payable to the alternate payee. If no cost of living adjustment is provided to the alternate payee, then the participant shall receive the full cost of living adjustment he or she would have received if the order had not been applied to the participant's account.
- (11) Except in cases involving child support payments, the retirement system may charge reasonable and necessary fees and expenses to the recipient and the alternate payee of a qualified domestic relations order for the administration of the qualified domestic relations order by retirement system. All fees and expenses shall be established by the administrative regulations promulgated by the board of trustees of the retirement system. The qualified domestic relations order shall specify whether the fees and expenses provided by this subsection shall be paid:
- (a) Solely by the participant;
 - (b) Solely by the alternate payee; or
 - (c) Equally shared by the participant and alternate payee.
- (12) The retirement system shall honor a qualified domestic relations order issued prior to July 15, 2010, for prospective benefit payments if the order or an amended version of the order meets the requirements established by this section and the administrative regulations promulgated by the retirement system. The order shall not apply to benefit payments issued by the retirement system prior to the date the order was approved by the retirement system.

Signed by Governor March 17, 2011.