



Uniformed Retirement System Possible Code Changes

Recommendation

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Background

In 1996, the Board adopted changes to the Uniformed Retirement System (URS) ordinance, specifically regarding Service-Connected Disabilities

These changes were made based on significant input from and collaboration with employee groups

Reasons for Change

- The reasons to change were:
 1. A need to decrease the rate of service-connected disability retirements
 2. A desire to encourage completion of a full career by improving normal retirement benefits
 3. A goal of creating an effective job re-training environment for disabled members as an alternative to retirement
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Before Changes Made in 1996

All approved service-connected disabilities were compensated at

66.6%

of the salary the individual was entitled to earn at retirement

After Changes Made in 1996

A new category of disability, called Severe Service-Connected Disability was added, resulting in two distinct disability conditions

Service-Connected

Compensation reduced from
66.6% to

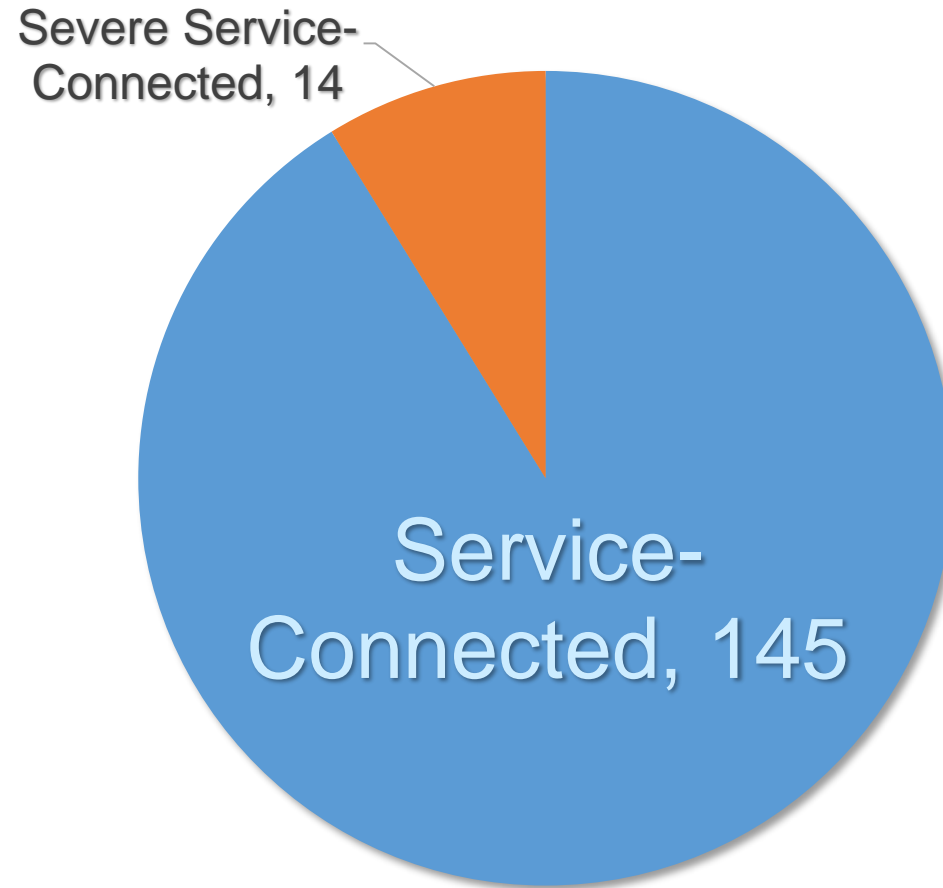
40%

Severe Service-Connected

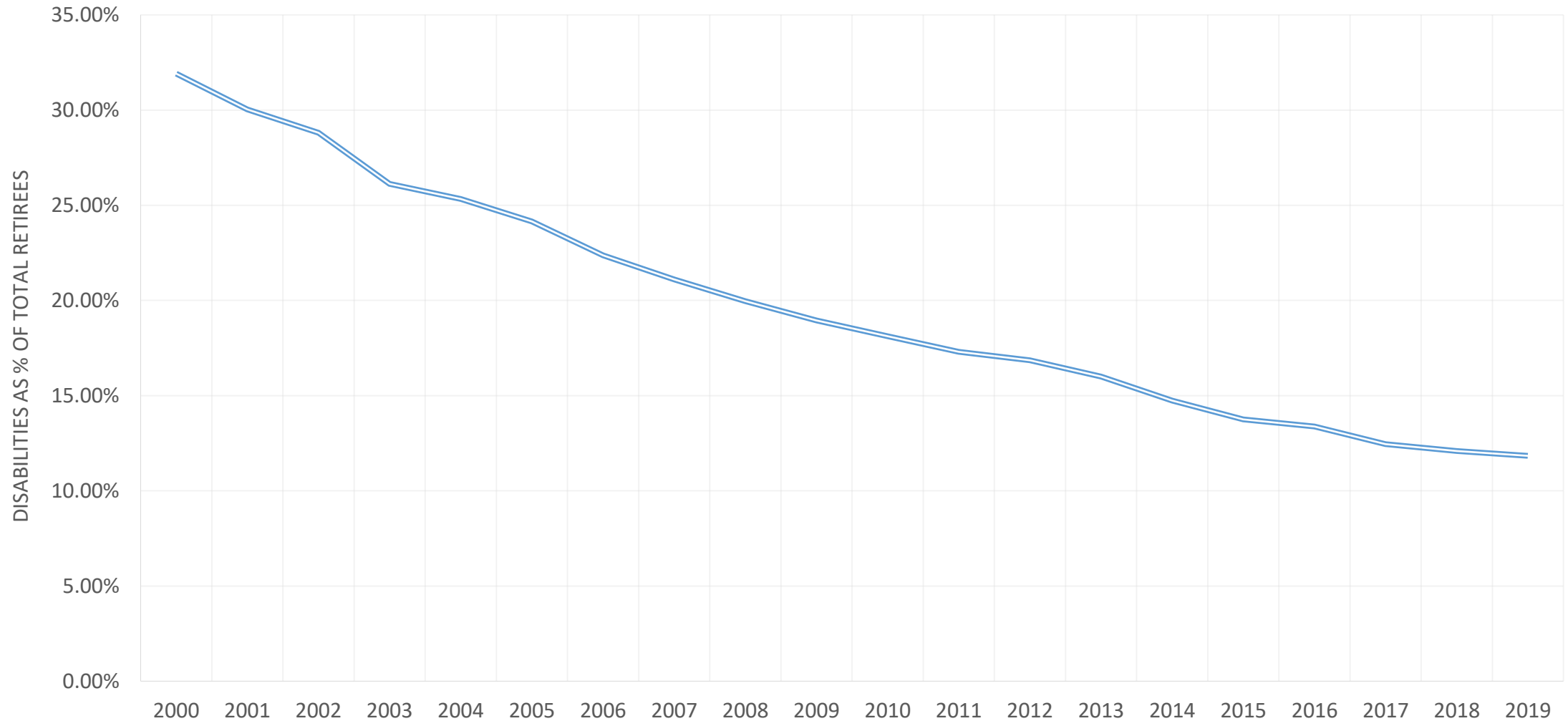
Compensated at

90%

Current Number of Disabled URS Members



Trend in Number of Disabled URS Members



Proposed Changes

- I. **Add** a category of disability for Occupational Asthma or Occupational Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis which was caused by documented **exposure to a toxic substance** in the workplace or during work-related activities

 - II. **Change** the definition of **Hepatitis C** to only include those cases that are chronic and compensable under workers compensation
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Rationale: Toxic Exposure

In June of 2019, a Firefighter applied for service-connected disability due to exposure he received during response to a fire at a waste-to-energy facility

His breathing has been acutely and permanently impaired because of his exposure to hazardous chemicals without respiratory protection

Rationale: Toxic Exposure

In July of 2019, the URS Board approved his application for service-connected disability, at **40%**

Because his condition was not one of the 11 conditions required to receive severe service-connected disability, the URS Board could not consider and grant the severe benefit of **90%**

Rationale: Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C has, for the most part, become treatable and is no longer a permanent impairment

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Over 90 percent of Hepatitis C cases are now curable*

*see background from CDC

Rationale: Hepatitis C

Thus Hepatitis C, as defined for Severe Service-Connected Disability, should only apply for those cases that are **permanently impairments**

Hepatitis C: Background

- The Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) has 2 stages: ***Acute*** and ***Chronic***
- Acute HCV *has no recommended treatment* as **15-25%** of people clear the virus without treatment
- Chronic HCV eventually develops in 75-85% of infected individuals

Chronic Hepatitis C Treatment

- The treatment for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection has evolved substantially since the introduction of highly effective HCV protease inhibitor therapies in 2011
- Over 90% of HCV infected persons can be cured of HCV infection **regardless of HCV genotype**, with 8-12 weeks of oral therapy

Chronic Hepatitis C Long-Term Effects

Of Individuals with Chronic Hepatitis C:

- 75%-85% will develop chronic infection
- 10%-20% will develop cirrhosis over 20-30 years

Long term effects of hepatitis C with cirrhosis, with each passing year:

- 3%-6% will develop liver failure
- 1%-5% will develop liver cancer

Note on Long-Term Effects

Even if cured, the effects of liver cirrhosis (if present) caused by the infection would continue to affect the individual. May need to specify or qualify that this condition only applies if treatment is contraindicated or unsuccessful and no cirrhosis has occurred.

Recommendation from the URS Board

- I. Add toxic chemical exposure to the list of impairments qualifying for Severe Service-Connected Disability
 - II. Make this added condition retroactive to June 2019
 - III. Change the definition of Hepatitis C
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