

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

2015 BILLS AFFECTING ATRS

January 16, 2015

Overview of 90th General Assembly and ATRS Processes

On Monday, January 12, 2015, the 90th General Assembly of Arkansas began. Dozens of new legislators were sworn in and the introduction of bills and passage of acts to enact new laws for Arkansas. In a general session, laws affecting any and all issues can be introduced as compared to the fiscal session in even numbered years that is essentially limited to fiscal issues and appropriations.

The Speaker-Elect of the House of Representatives is Representative Jeremy Gillam of Judsonia. The President Pro Tempore of the Arkansas Senate is Senator Jonathan Dismang of Searcy. ATRS looks forward to the leadership and direction provided by these two hard-working and respected leaders of the 90th General Assembly.

Over the last two years, the ATRS Board and staff has looked through the ATRS laws and operation to look for needed changes and adjustments. In various Board meetings, the Board approved recommendations by the ATRS Operations Committee for potential changes for the 90th General Assembly to consider. ATRS has a legislative package of 7 bills plus its appropriation bill for a total of 8 bills to be submitted by or on behalf of ATRS. ATRS is currently seeking sponsors for its 7 general bills and the Joint Budget Committee always sponsors the appropriation bills for state agencies.

Many are used to ATRS having 15 to 20 general purpose bills in a legislative session. The 7 bills are fewer bills than in recent sessions but the recent sessions have addressed many of the major issues facing ATRS. Most of the 7 bills are general "housekeeping" bills. This executive director update will provide a basic summary of each bill.

As in past sessions, ATRS plans to provide weekly updates on the ATRS package bills and all other bills filed that impact ATRS. The report should also give details on the legislative process that applies to legislation affecting ATRS. Typically, members of the General Assembly also propose legislation affecting ATRS that is not a part of the ATRS package. ATRS tries to work closely with members of the General Assembly on legislation to ensure issues of interest to the General Assembly are properly addressed.

Retirement legislation is usually introduced in the first 15 to 20 days of the legislative session since bills affecting benefits and operations of retirement systems are evaluated by the General Assembly's actuary and outside actuaries. The early introduction process leaves sufficient time for full actuarial review and legislative action on retirement legislation.