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ADJOURNMENT

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## FUNDING AND IMPROVING PINELLAS COUNTY'S EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

COMPARING EXISTING PRIVATE TRANSPORT TO  
PROPOSED FIREFIGHTER TRANSPORT

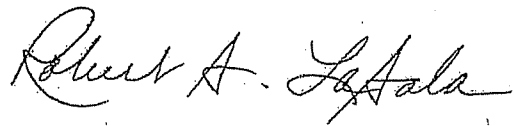
NOVEMBER 23, 2011

Pinellas County and many fire departments are currently analyzing critical matters related to Emergency Medical Services. Currently, the core issue is whether the County should change its EMS system from our current private ambulance transport of emergency and non-emergency incidents to allow the fire departments to do all transport exclusively. My staff and I believe that our system should remain unchanged; some firefighters believe that they should take over that responsibility.

In an effort to try to provide clarity on this complex discussion, we've produced this easy-to-read and understand comparative of the two proposed approaches. The plan originating from County staff and our consultant is simply referred to as the "County Plan"; the proposal that firefighters Scott Sanford and Jim Millican have suggested is known as the "S-M Plan." Please know that every effort has been made to present the facts and figures without hyperbole, exaggeration, or inflammatory language.

After reading this summary, if you wish to have further detailed information, you may also refer to any number of documents that are housed on the County's website at [www.pinellascounty.org/emsstudy](http://www.pinellascounty.org/emsstudy). Those documents that may be most helpful to you as well as the documents that we have based this summary on are the IPS Consultant Report (April 2011), the Sanford -Millican Report,

and the Pinellas County Staff Analysis of the Sanford-Millican Report (September 28, 2011).



Robert LaSala  
County Administrator  
Pinellas County

## OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SYSTEM

EMS is provided countywide by the Board of County Commissioners, sitting as the EMS Authority, a special, countywide taxing district. Pinellas uses a dual response system that has 18 fire service agencies that provide medical first response (MFR) to an incident or situation and one private ambulance provider that handles the transporting of emergency and non-emergency patients.

## THE COUNTY PLAN AND S-M PLAN BOTH AGREE ON:

- Advanced Life Support (ALS), Paramedic Dual Response System
- Marginal engine funding (County funds by positions)
- Priority dispatch

*(See back page for additional information on each of the items.)*

## BY THE NUMBERS

The County Plan and S-M Plan disagree on 911 and non-emergency transport. Below are side-by-side comparisons of relevant figures and information.

### COST ANNUALLY\*

(in millions)

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Medical First Response	\$33.0	\$30.1
Unaccounted for Costs	\$0.0	\$4.3
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$33.0</b>	<b>\$34.4</b>
Ambulance/Transport	\$30.5	\$33.5
Ambulance Program Support	\$11.5	\$16.2
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$42.0</b>	<b>\$49.7</b>
Unaccounted for Costs	\$0.0	\$15.2
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$41.5</b>	<b>\$65.0</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$75.0</b>	<b>\$99.4</b>

### UNITS ON DUTY

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Paramedic Fire Engines	72	60
Paramedic Ambulance	53	51

### SALARIES\*\*

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Annual Salaries/Benefits	\$58,000	\$98,000
Pensions	Matching 401K	No match Special Risk

### OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Additional Tax		
Subsidy Required	No	Yes***
New Cost Shifts to Cities	Yes	Yes
Increase in government employees	No	Yes
Higher Salaries, Pensions, and Benefits	No	Yes
Governance in Place	Yes	No
Liability Costs Plan	Yes	No
Workforce Management	Yes	No
Response Time Accountability	Yes	No
Ambulance Fleet Readiness	Yes	No
Cost Containment/Financial Stability	Yes	No

### LOCAL HOSPITALS

	Supports County Plan	Supports S-M Plan
Morton Plant Mease	Yes	No
Edward White	Yes	No
Northside	Yes	No
Palms of Pasadena	Yes	No
St. Petersburg General	Yes	No

#### Notes:

\* Figures rounded

\*\* Based on average of salaries reported by fire departments in budgets to County.

\*\*\* Cost of transport under S-M Plan would exceed current user fee revenues by 19% or more.

## **LEVEL OF SERVICE**

By design, private ambulance transport arrives following fire department because Pinellas is dual response. When the patient is stabilized for transport by the private ambulance, the fire personnel are then free to go back into service and are available for the next emergency call. Both the County Plan and the S-M Plan agree that this approach should remain in place.

## **MARGINAL ENGINE FUNDING (COUNTY FUNDS BY POSITIONS)**

This approach provides for fund of MFR units at the same level for every fire department with one County-funded position per MFR unit. This funding level is based upon the countywide average for annual operating costs. It is not based upon volume or funding level history. This approach is inherently fair to all fire departments and communities while protecting the existing level of service for all citizens of Pinellas County. Both the County and S-M plans support this approach.

## **PRIORITY DISPATCH**

With priority dispatch, unnecessary ambulance and fire/rescue responses may be reduced by 10% and will directly reduce costs associated with fuel and vehicle maintenance. Of course, any life-threatening or otherwise serious medical emergencies will always get a lights-and-siren emergency response from both the fire department and the private ambulance provider; however, lesser emergencies would get a less intense response. Both the County and S-M plans believe that priority dispatch is appropriate.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT**

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# FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES

## POLL OF REGISTERED VOTERS

SEPTEMBER 2010

**VancoreJones**  
Communications, Inc.

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## METHODOLOGY

A professional phone bank interviewed a random sample of 501 registered voters in Florida. The survey was conducted August 10 through August 15<sup>th</sup>.

The composition of respondents was matched according to several known demographics in an attempt to make the final sample "look like" the state using geography, race, and party affiliation. For example, the respondents in the survey are 70% white and 14% African American; while the voting population is 69% white and 13% African American. Further, our sample is comprised of 42% Democrats while the state is 41%; our sample is 36% Republican and statewide registration is 36% GOP.

Based on the above, the sample is both random and representative yielding a general response set with a margin of error of  $\pm 4.4\%$  at the 95% confidence level.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When it comes to the pay and benefits of police and fire fighters, voters are generally unaware of the array of benefits currently afforded them. Initially and by a large margin most respondents felt these benefits are "about right" or "too low". Further, they have a general misperception as to how much police officers and fire fighters are paid, with nearly 70% believing the average salary is \$60,000 per year or less and 90% believing it is \$70,000 per year or less.

We asked an extended series of questions identifying the assortment of pay and benefits currently provided to most police and fire fighters. Almost without exception, voters feel that most of these benefits are too generous. For example, 63% felt retirement benefits should be consistent with other government employees, 66% opposed 20 years and out, and 73% felt that adding overtime to base calculations was unfair. Further, 70% oppose DROP, 71% felt \$70,000 per year average salary was too high, and a whopping 84% felt they should not make the same when they retire as when they are working!

Oddly, more than 60% stated that increasing benefits could bankrupt local government yet 77% do not equate these pension benefits to taxes and instead correlate higher taxes to "other spending and other government programs".

And while voters do not necessarily connect benefits to taxes, a strong majority (74%) of respondents *still* wanted lawmakers to look at ways to "rein in the growth of benefits for police and fire fighters" with 44% feeling very strongly about that.

We can conclude, based on these findings, that the public is largely ignorant or agnostic to benefit packages and salaries currently available to police and fire fighters. However, once they are informed about these benefits, they believe they are excessive and have problems with several of them specifically. And while they don't tie these benefits directly to higher taxes, they *do* want to see government leaders to take action to begin reigning in this type of spending and they want that by a strong margin

## DETAILED FINDINGS

*I would like to read you a series of public policy questions. For each, please tell me if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each one. Each of these questions pertains to benefit and pensions that local city governments pay to local firefighters and/or police officers.*

**1. Do you think that the salary and benefits provided to police officers and fire fighters are:**

Much Too High	9%
Somewhat High	12%
About Right	51%
Too Low	28%

Just over half of respondents said that salaries and benefits provided to police officers and fire fighters are just right.

A quarter (25%) of 46-60 year olds said that they were too high or somewhat high, while only 6% of 36-45 year olds said the same thing. 35% of African Americans said that it was too low, while only 29% of Caucasians and 22% of Hispanics agree. Men were more likely than women to say that it was much or somewhat too high (25% to 19%). 26% of both Republicans and Independents say that it is much or somewhat too high, while only 15% of Democrats say the same.

**2. In some cities, police officers can earn full retirement after 20 years of service no matter their age, which means they can earn full health benefits plus be paid as much as 80% of their salary for the rest of their lives. Do you:**

Strongly Support	24%
Somewhat Support	26%
Somewhat Oppose	25%
Strongly Oppose	25%
Support	50%
Oppose	50%

Respondents were evenly split. Younger respondents were much more likely to support this than older ones. 75% of 36-45 year olds and 64% of 18-35 year olds support it, while 53% of 46-60 year olds and 55% of people over 61 oppose it. 61% of Hispanics support this, 51% of African Americans support it, and only 48% of Caucasians support it. Those with an income between \$30,000-\$50,000 are the most split, with 45% saying they support it and 55% saying they oppose it. Men are much more likely to oppose it than women (59% to 44%). 56% of both Independents and Republicans oppose it, while 57% of Democrats support it.

**3. Which of the following comes closer to your opinion?**

Police officer and firefighters should be allowed to retire after 20 years of service because their jobs are hard.	37%
They should have retirement benefits that are consistent with other government employees.	63%

The majority of people say that retirement benefits should be consistent with other government employees.

36-45 year olds are the most likely to say that police officers and fire fighters should be allowed to retire after 20 years (45%). Caucasians are the most likely to say that benefits should be consistent with other workers (67%), followed by Hispanics and African Americans (61% to 54%). Those with incomes over \$75,000 were the most likely to say that they should have consistent benefits (69%), while those with incomes between \$30,000-\$50,000 were the least likely (57%). Men were more likely than women to say that they should have consistent benefits. (71% to 58%). Independents were the most likely to say that they should be consistent (72%), followed by Republicans and Democrats (69% and 56%).

**4. In some cities, police officers or firefighters can retire after 20 years of service and receive 80% of their salaries for the rest of their lives. This means that for many, they can retire in their early to mid forties and receive pensions as high as \$80,000 per year for the rest of their lives. Do you:**

Strongly Support	16%
Somewhat Support	18%
Somewhat Oppose	24%
Strongly Oppose	42%
Support	34%
Oppose	66%

The majority of respondents say that they oppose police officers or firefighters retiring after 20 years of service and receiving 80% of their salaries for the rest of their lives.

Fifty-three percent of 18-35 year olds and 51% of 36-45 year olds support this policy, while 66% of 46-60 year olds and 69% of people 61 and older say that they oppose it. 69% of Caucasians oppose this, along with 55% of Hispanics and 52% of African Americans. People with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 are the most likely to oppose this (72%). Men are more likely to oppose this than women (71% to 62%). 72% of Republicans and 70% of Independents oppose this, while only 57% of Democrats oppose it.

**5. Many times, police officers can work overtime to earn extra pay. Current law allows them to use that overtime pay to calculate their retirement benefit. This can often push their retirement payments above the amount that has been funded for in the pension plan and can lead to additional tax dollars needing to be contributed to the plan. Do you think this is:**

Very Fair	8%
Somewhat Fair	19%
Somewhat Unfair	29%
Very Unfair	44%
Fair	27%
Unfair	73%

A majority of respondents say that this is unfair.

Younger respondents were more likely to say that it is unfair (87% of 18-35 year olds, compared to 72% of all other age groups). Caucasians are the most likely to say that it is unfair (74%) compared to 66% of African Americans and 63% of Hispanics. People with higher incomes are more likely to say that it is unfair than people with lower incomes (77% of people with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 said it was unfair compared to 64% of people with incomes under \$30,000). 79% of men say that it is unfair compared to 68% of women. 81% of Republicans say it is unfair, along with 78% of Independents and 63% of Democrats.

**6. What do you think should be the average pay, not the starting pay, but the average annual pay for the average police officer?**

Less than \$40,000 per year	10%
\$41,000-\$60,000 per year	58%
\$61,000-\$70,000 per year	21%
\$71,000-\$80,000 per year	9%
More than \$80,000 per year	2%

A majority of respondents think that the average pay for the average police officer should be between \$41,000-\$60,000 a year.

Thirty percent of 18-35 year olds said that they should make between \$61,000-\$70,000, while 62% of 46-60 year olds said they should make between \$41,000-\$60,000 a year. African Americans were the most likely to say they should make less than \$40,000 (17%). Women were more likely than men to say that they should earn more money, with 24% saying they should make between \$61,000-\$70,000 (compared to 16% of men).

**7. If you knew that the average salary for an average police officer was over \$70,000 per year would you say:**

That is Too Low	2%
That it is About Right	42%
That it is Too High	41%
That it is Much Too High	14%

Younger respondents were most likely to say that it is about right, with 60%. Almost half of African Americans say that it is about right (49%), while Hispanics and Caucasians are split between about right and too high (41% of Caucasians say about right and 44% say too high, while 43% of Hispanics say it is about right and 43% say it is too high). Men are more likely to say that it is much too high compared to women (21% to 10%). 48% of Republicans think that it is too high, while only 43% of Independents and 36% of Democrats feel the same way

**8. What do you think should be the average retirement pay for a police officer?**

Less than \$40,000 per year	22%
\$41,000-\$60,000 per year	54%
\$61,000-\$70,000 per year	16%
\$71,000-\$80,000 per year	6%
More than \$80,000 per year	2%

The majority of respondents think that the average retirement pay for a police officer should be between \$41,000 and \$60,000 a year.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of 18-35 year olds, 57% of 46-60 year olds, and 52% of people over 61 think that it should be between \$41,000 and \$60,000 a year. 72% of Hispanics and 58% of African Americans think it should be between \$41,000 and \$60,000 a year. Caucasians were the most likely to say that it should be less than \$40,000 a year, with 26%.

**9. If you knew that the retirement pay for an average police officer was over \$70,000 per year would you say:**

That is Too Low	1%
That it is About Right	28%
That it is Too High	45%
That it is Much Too High	26%

The majority of respondents (71%) say that the retirement pay is much too high or too high.

People over 61 were the most likely to say that retirement pay is too high or much too high. African Americans were the least likely to say that that it was much too high or too high (52%), followed by Caucasians and Hispanics (73% and 77%). 37% of men say that it is much too high, while only 18% of women say the same. 80% of Republicans think that it is much too high or too high, followed by 72% of Independents and 63% of Democrats.

**10. When comparing the salaries and benefits of police officers and firefighters, do you think:**

Police officers should earn more than fire fighters.	20%
Fire fighters should earn more than police officers.	4%
They should make about the same	76%

A majority of people said that police officers and fire fighters should make about the same salary. However, amongst people who did not think they should make the same, more people thought police officers should earn more than fire fighters.

Younger respondents were the most likely to say they should be the same (80%), while 46-60 year olds were the most likely to say that police officers should make more (22%). Caucasians were the most likely to say they should make the same (78%), followed by African Americans and Hispanics (75% and 70%). 26% of people with incomes over \$75,000 think that police officers should earn more. Interestingly, no respondents with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 said that fire fighters should earn more. Women were more likely to say that they should make about the same (80% to 71%), while men were more likely to say that police officers should earn more (26% to 16%).

**11. Current law limits how high a police officers of fire fighters retirement pay can be to 100% of their salary. Would you support or oppose a measure that said police officers and fire fighters could not have a retirement pay that was higher than 75% of their highest salary? This means if a police officer was making \$100,000 when he or she retired, his retirement pay, or pension, could not be above \$75,000. Would you support or oppose that?**

Strongly Support	43%
Somewhat Support	32%
Somewhat Oppose	11%
Strongly Oppose	14%
Support	75%
Oppose	25%

A majority of respondents support this.

18-35 year olds were the least likely to support it (57%), while 36-45 year olds were the most likely to support it (81%). Caucasians were the most likely to support it (76%), followed by 73% of African Americans and 69% of Hispanics. Republicans and Democrats were slightly more likely to support it than Independents (76% and 74% compared to 71%).

**12. Should fire fighter or police officers be paid as much in salary when they retire as they were making when they were working?**

Definitely Yes	5%
Somewhat Yes	11%
Somewhat No	17%
Definitely No	67%
Yes	16%
No	84%

An overwhelming majority of respondents say that fire fighters and police officers should not make as much when they retire as they were making when they were working.

The older the respondent the more likely they were to say no (87% of those over 61, 83% of those 46-60, 70% of those 36-45, and 60% of those 18-35 said no). Caucasians were the most likely to say no (85%), followed by Hispanics and African Americans (80% and 71%). People with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 were the most likely to say no, with 90%. Those with incomes between \$30,000-\$50,000 were the least likely to say no, with 77%. 92% of men said no, while only 78% of women said the same. Republicans were the most likely to say no (89%), followed by Independents and Democrats (84% and 79%).

**13. When thinking about police and fire fighter pensions, do you think that the money to pay these pensions comes from:**

Police and fire fighters who make donations into these funds	5%
It is paid using tax dollars	34%
It is a combination of both these things	61%

Most people think that the money to pay these pensions come from a combination of fire fighter and police donations into the funds along with tax dollars.

Seventy percent of 18-35 year olds and 36-45 year olds believe it is a combination, while 63% of people over 61 and 55% of people between 46-60 agreed. Interestingly, no African Americans think that police and fire fighters make donations into the funds; 70% say it is a combination and 30% say it is paid using tax dollars. The higher the income of the respondent, the more likely they were to think that the money comes from tax dollars (24% of people who have an income under \$30,000, , and 45% of people with incomes over \$75,000). Democrats and Republicans were slightly more likely to think it was paid using tax dollars when compared to Independents (36% and 35% compared to 28%).



**14. The pensions that are paid to police and firefighters are paid by the government through tax dollars collected from local taxes. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion:**

I support good retirement and pension benefits for police and fire fighters because they risk their lives and earn those benefits.	45%
Some of the benefits are excessive and are a part of the reason taxes are so high.	55%

Over half of respondents say that some of the benefits are excessive and are part of the reason why taxes are so high.

The youngest respondents (18-35 year olds) were the only age group to where a majority said that they support good retirement and pension benefits (53%),. 55% of African Americans say they support good benefits, while 61% of Hispanics and 55% of Caucasians feel that some of the benefits are excessive. Lower incomes are more likely to say that they support good benefits (52% of those with income under \$30,000 and 53% of those with incomes between \$30,000-\$50,000). 64% of men say that some of the benefits are too excessive, while 52% of women support good benefits. Republicans are the most likely to say that the some of the benefits are excessive (64%), followed by Independents and Democrats (54% and 47%).

**15. State law says that if a fire fighter has an injured back or other ailments like high blood pressure or a breathing condition, it is automatically presumed that the fire fighter contracted that illness on the job and is eligible to receive retirement early on disability. Which of the following is closes to your opinion:**

There should be a process to determine the cause of illness.	78%
As being a firefighter is a dangerous occupation, we should presume that these illnesses were likely caused by conditions of the job.	20%
Unsure	2%

A majority of respondents feel that there should be a process to determine the cause of illness.

Older respondents (46-60 and 61 and older) were more likely to say this (78%) compared to younger ones (18-35 year olds and 36-45 year olds, with 70%). Caucasians and Hispanics were more likely than African Americans to say that there should be a process (81% and 78% respectively, compared with 65%). The higher the income, the more likely they were to say that there should be a process (86% of people with an income between \$50,000-\$75,000, compared to 70% of people who make under \$30,000 and 67% of those who make between \$30,000-\$50,000). 25% of Democrats say that being a firefighter is a dangerous occupation and that we should presume these illnesses were likely cause by job conditions, while only 17% of Republicans and Independents feel the same way.

**16. As stated above, state law says that if fire fighters have certain illnesses, they are presumed to have been caused by the work of being a fire fighter. Should the general health of the fire fighter or other factors like smoking be considered in determining the cause of disability?**

Definitely Yes	67%
Probably Yes	18%
Probably No	6%
Definitely No	9%
Yes	85%
No	15%

A majority of respondents say that the general health of the firefighters should be considered in determining the cause of a disability.

36-45 year olds were the most likely to say yes, with 91%. Caucasians were the most likely to say yes (86%) followed by Hispanics (81%), and African Americans (78%). Those with incomes under \$30,000 and between \$30,000-\$50,000 were slightly less likely to say yes (79% and 78%), when compared to respondents with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 and over \$75,000 (90% and 88%). Independents and Republicans were slightly more likely to say yes than Democrats (87% and 88% compared to 82%).

**17. Police and fire fighters also participate in a retirement program called DROP. In this program, they can collect retirement benefits while they continue to work. Their retirement benefits remain in a trust fund and earn interest, tax deferred, for five years while they continue to work. Once completed, they can collect their retirement benefits and go back to work while also collecting their full-time salary. What is your opinion of this?**

Very Favorable	10%
Somewhat Favorable	20%
Somewhat Unfavorable	25%
Very Unfavorable	45%
Favorable	30%
Unfavorable	70%

A majority of respondents have an unfavorable view of police and fire fighter participation in the DROP program.

Younger respondents were more likely to say this is favorable than older respondents. (43% of 18-35 year olds and 48% of 36-45 year olds, compared to 30% of 46-60 year olds and 28% of those 61 and over). Caucasians are the most likely to have an unfavorable view of this (73%), followed by African Americans (62%), and Hispanics (59%). Men are more likely than women to have an unfavorable opinion (76% to 65%). Independents and Republicans were more likely to view this unfavorably than Democrats (76% and 75% compared to 61%).

**18. Do you think that police officers and fire fighters should:**

Be able to retire after 20 or 25 years, no matter how old they are and collect full benefits for the rest of their lives.	39%
Wait until they are a certain age above 62 years old in order to retire and begin collecting full benefits.	61%

The majority of respondents think that police officers and fire fighters should wait they until are a certain age in order to retire and begin collecting benefits.

People over the age of 61 were the most likely to say that they should wait until a certain age (67%), while only 48% of people 36-45 agree. African Americans were the most likely to say that they should wait (65%), followed by Caucasians and Hispanics (60% and 54%). 68% of respondents with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 and 65% with incomes under \$30,000 think they should wait, along with 58% of people with incomes over \$75,000 and 56% of people with incomes between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

**19. Current law says that police officers or fire fighters can retire whenever they put in a certain number of years, like 20 or 25 years. This means some can retire and receive full benefits starting in their early forties. As a way to rein in government spending, some people want to say that police officers and fire fighters can only begin collecting full retirement benefits when they turn 62 years old. How do you feel about this, do you:**

Strongly Support	35%
Somewhat Support	28%
Somewhat Oppose	17%
Strongly Oppose	20%
Support	63%
Unfavorable	37%

The majority of respondents support police and fire fighters collecting full retirement benefits when they turn 62 as a way to rein in government spending.

The older respondent, the more likely they were to support it (50% of 18-35 year olds, 57% of 36-45 year olds, 59% of 46-60 year olds, and 68% of people over 61). Hispanics were the most likely to support this (72%), followed by Caucasians (63%), and African Americans (59%). Republicans were the most likely to support this (66%), followed by Independents and Democrats (62% and 61%).

**20. If we keep raising police and fire fighter salaries, pensions and benefits, it could eventually bankrupt local government.**

Strongly Agree	33%
Somewhat Agree	29%
Somewhat Disagree	19%
Strongly Disagree	19%
Agree	62%
Disagree	38%

The majority of respondents agree that if police and fire fighters salaries, pensions, and benefits keep rising that it could eventually bankrupt local government. 36-45 year olds were the most likely to agree, with 66%. Caucasians were the most likely to agree with 65%, followed by Hispanics and African Americans (60% and 47%). People with lower incomes were slightly more likely to agree than people with higher incomes (64% of people with incomes under \$30,000 and 67% of people with incomes between \$30,000-\$50,000 compared to 61% of people with incomes between \$50,000-\$75,000 and people who make over \$75,000). Men were more likely to agree than women (65% to 60%). Republicans were the most likely to agree (74%), followed by Independents and Democrats (61% and 54%).

**21. Should Florida lawmakers be looking at ways to rein in the growth of benefits for police and fire fighters?**

Definitely Yes	44%
Probably Yes	30%
Probably No	12%
Definitely No	14%
Yes	74%
No	26%

A majority of respondents said yes.

The older the respondent, the more likely they were to say yes (63% of 18-35 year olds, 72% of 36-45 year olds, 74% of 46-60 year olds, and 75% of people over 61). Caucasians were the most likely to say yes (77%), followed by African Americans and Hispanics (65% and 61%). Men were more likely to say yes than women (79% to 70%). Republicans were more likely to say yes than Independents and Democrats (80% to 73% and 68%).

## DEMOGRAPHIC TREND ANALYSIS

### YOUNGER RESPONDENTS

**Younger respondents generally have a more favorable view of police and fire fighter benefits.**

Younger respondents were the most likely to say that benefits are too low, and support police and fire fighters earning full retirement after 20 years. They are the least likely to support changing the law to limit how high a police or fire fighters retirement could be.

Over half say that they support good retirement and pension benefits because they risk their lives and earn those benefits. They also had a more favorable opinion of the DROP retirement program. Finally, they were the most likely to say that Florida lawmakers should not be looking at ways to rein in the growth of benefits.

- Fifty-three percent (53%) of 18-35 year olds support a policy where police officers or firefighters can retire after 20 years and receive 80% of their salaries for the rest of their lives, meaning that many retire in the early to mid forties and receive pensions as high as \$80,000. Only 34% of people overall support this policy.
- The youngest voters (18-35 year olds) were the least likely to support a policy that limits police officer and fire fighters to having a retirement pay that is 75% of their highest salary (57% support). Overall, 75% of people support this policy.
- The youngest voters (18-35 year olds) were the only age group where a majority said that they support good retirement and pension benefits for police and fire fighters because they risk their lives and earn those benefits (53%).
- The youngest voters (18-35 year olds) were the least likely to say that Florida lawmakers should be looking at ways to rein in the growth of benefits for police and fire fighters (63%).

### OLDER RESPONDENTS

**Conversely, older respondents generally had a less tolerant view of benefits, and were the most likely to want to see a change.**

Older respondents were the most likely to oppose fire fighters and police officers retiring after 20 years and receiving pensions as high as \$80,000 for the rest of their lives starting in their mid forties. 87% oppose police or fire fighters making as much in salary when they retire as when they worked. Older respondents were also more likely to say that there should be a process to determine disability, rather than presuming it is an injury or illness caused by the job. They were the most likely to say that fire fighters and police should wait until a certain age to retire and start collecting benefits.

- Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents over 61 years old oppose a policy where police officers or firefighters can retire after 20 years and receive 80% of their salaries for the rest of their lives, meaning that many retire in the early to mid forties and receive pensions as high as \$80,000.

- Eighty-seven percent (87%) of people over 61 oppose police or fire fighters making as much in salary when they retire as when they worked. Overall, 84% opposed it along with 60% of the youngest voters (18-35).
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents who are 46-60 years old or over 61 said that there should be a process to determine the cause of illness, rather than automatically presuming it comes from the job. This is higher than the 70% of 18-35 year olds and 36-45 year olds who say there should be a process.
- Sixty-seven percent (67%) of people over the age of 61 said that police officers and firefighters should wait until they are a certain age above 62 in order to retire and begin collecting full benefits. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the overall population said that they should wait until a certain age.

Support for benefits trends downward, with older respondents having less support and younger respondents having more support.

### AFRICAN AMERICANS

**African Americans are supportive of current benefits, and in some instances think they are too low.**

African Americans were the most likely to say that they are too low, and the most likely to say that they should be able to retire after 20 years because their job is hard. They were the most likely to say that a \$70,000 average salary was about right. They were most likely to say that we should presume fire fighter and police illnesses are caused by the job.

- Thirty-five percent (35%) of African Americans said that salary and benefits provided to police and fire fighters are too low, the most of any race.
- Forty-six percent (46%) of African Americans say that police officers and fire fighters should be allowed to retire after 20 years of service because their jobs are hard.
- Only 65% of African Americans said that there should be a process to determine illness, the least of any race. Overall, 78% of respondents said there should be a process to determine disability.

### WHITES

**Whites are more supportive of changing the laws regarding benefits.**

Whites were the most likely to oppose police officers and firefighters retiring in their forties and receiving high pensions for the rest of their lives, and to say that it is unfair that they use overtime to calculate retirement pay. They were the most likely to support changing the law to limit the how high a police officers or firefighters benefits could be, as well as to say that the general health of fire fighters should be considered in determining disability.

- Sixty-nine percent (69%) of whites oppose police or fire fighters retiring after 20 years and receiving 80% of their salaries for the rest of their lives, meaning that many retire in the early to mid forties and receive pensions as high as \$80,000.

This is significantly higher than the 52% of African Americans and 55% of Hispanics who oppose it.

- Seventy-four percent (74%) of whites say that it is unfair that police and fire fighters can use overtime pay to calculate their retirement benefits.
- Eighty-six percent (86%) of whites say that the general health of the fire fighter should be considered when determining disability.
- Seventy-seven percent (77%) of whites say that Florida lawmakers should be looking at ways to rein in the growth of benefits. This is significantly higher than the 65% of African Americans and 61% of Hispanics who say that lawmakers should rein in growth.

## GENDER

**On virtually every question women were more generous with benefits than men.**

Throughout the questions relating to benefits for fire fighters and police officers, women were consistently more generous with benefits than men. A few of the more pronounced differences can be seen in the following examples. Thirty-three percent (33%) of women said that the salary and benefits provided to police officers and fire fighters were too low, while only 20% of men said the same. 43% of women also said that police officers and fire fighters should be allowed to retire after 20 years of service because their jobs are hard, while only 34% of men said the same.

## PARTY

**Republicans generally support less benefits, while Democrats are more supportive of benefits. Independents generally fall in the middle.**

57% of Republicans supported a measure to limit future increases in local government revenues to personal spending and inflation. This support for limited spending carried over to fire fighter and police benefits, as Republicans were consistently more likely to oppose early retirement with full benefits and more generous benefits that are out of line with other state employees. On the other hand, Democrats were more likely to support generous benefits. Independents generally fell in the middle.

- 72% of Republicans, 70% of Independents, and 57% of Democrats oppose police or fire fighters retiring after 20 years and receiving 80% of their salaries for the rest of their lives.
- 81% of Republicans, 78% of Independents, and 63% of Democrats say that it is unfair for fire fighters and police to use overtime pay to calculate retirement benefits.
- 64% of Republicans, 54% of Independents, and 47% of Democrats say that benefits are excessive and are a part of the reason taxes are so high.
- 66% of Republicans, 62% of Independents, and 61% of Democrats say that police officers should only begin collecting full retirement benefits when they turn 62 years old.