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UPDATED (September 24, 2010): The individual pension amounts for fiscal year 2010 are now available at http://www.nhrs.org/documents/NHRS_Annuity_Amounts_FY2010.pdf

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NH Retirement System Posts Pension Data

List of individual pension amounts, with names withheld, available at www.nhrs.org

CONCORD, N.H. – The New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS, the retirement system) has released a list detailing individual annual pension amounts paid to more than 23,500 retirees or their beneficiaries.

The list – organized from the largest pension benefit amount to the smallest – includes each individual retiree’s NHRS member classification (Employee, Teacher, Police, or Fire), as well as the type of benefit (i.e. service retirement, early retirement, job-related disability, non-job-related disability, etc.) and whether the recipient was employed by the state or a political subdivision. The list does not include the names of individual pension recipients.

“The financial health of public pensions is under scrutiny across the country, and NHRS works hard to be as transparent as possible,” said NHRS Executive Director Dick Ingram. “However, we must balance what we see as our legal obligation to protect the privacy of our members and retirees with the public’s right to know how the retirement system operates. By providing this list, we believe we are striking a proper balance.”

The list, which was compiled in October 2009 in response to a right-to-know request from a public policy organization, has been uploaded to the retirement system’s website, www.nhrs.org. It is available in Portable Document Format (PDF) format by clicking on “Individual Pension Benefit Amounts” under the “Notices” section on the home page.

The direct link to the file is: http://www.nhrs.org/documents/NHRS_Annuity_Amounts_Oct_09.pdf

A list of annual pension amounts paid in the year ending June 30, 2010 – the close of the NHRS fiscal year – is being generated and will be uploaded later this week. This list will be updated annually and posted on the NHRS website. The website already includes more than a decade of comprehensive annual financial reports,

along with other supplemental information pertaining to the operation of the retirement system, including plan details, actuarial valuations and meeting minutes.

According to its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for 2009, NHRS distributed \$452 million in pension benefits in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009. The average annual benefit was about \$18,000. A breakdown of pension benefits by member classification is available online in the retirement system's Summary Annual Financial Report at http://www.nhrs.org/Investments/documents/2009Summary_Financial_Report.pdf.

Comprehensive financial data for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, is currently being compiled.

All pension payments are determined under RSA 100-A, which details pension eligibility, as well as the formulas used to calculate benefits.

The decision to post the list online comes as the retirement system is contesting a Hillsborough County Superior Court judge's ruling that NHRS must release the names of the 500 retirement system members who received the highest annual pension payments in 2009, along with the amounts of those payments.

"We believe the Court's order misinterpreted the statute," NHRS said last week in a prepared statement. "The retirement system has a legal obligation to protect the privacy of individuals who are entitled to privacy; that is why we are filing a motion to stay implementation of the Court's Order."

The list of all pension amounts – without the names of the recipients – has been offered to the Union Leader on two occasions; the newspaper declined to accept the list.

"By seeking a reconsideration of the ruling in the right-to-know case involving the Union Leader, the retirement system is fulfilling its legal duty to protect the privacy of our retirees," Ingram said. "At the same time, NHRS is posting the individual pension amounts online, without names, because we feel it provides the public with relevant information regarding the levels of benefits and pension policy that does not compromise the privacy rights of our retirees or their beneficiaries."

The New Hampshire Retirement System provides retirement, disability, and death benefits to its eligible members and their beneficiaries. The State of New Hampshire and more than 475 local government employers participate in NHRS for their employees, teachers, firefighters, and police officers. NHRS has approximately 51,000 active members and 24,500 pension recipients. NHRS administers a defined benefit plan qualified as a tax-exempt entity under section 401(a) and 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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