Chapter 7: Optional Service Credit and Payment Options

Optional service credit

Credit for several types of optional service can be obtained by verifying the service and making a contribution to TRS. In general, the amount due for the service credit is equal to the contributions that would have been required if the service had been earned under TRS plus interest.

A member may reinstate service that has been cancelled by a refund and purchase service credit for the following licensed teaching:

- approved leaves of absence,
- involuntary layoffs,
- military service interrupting TRS-covered service,
- military service not interrupting TRS-covered service,
- pre-1983 pregnancy and adoption,
- pre-1990 part-time, substitute, and homebound teaching,
- refunded service,
- teaching in out-of-state public common school,
- recognized Illinois private school service (must apply on or before June 30, 2028), and
- paid student teaching.

With the exception of absences due to pregnancy or adoption prior to July 1, 1983, a member must pay for optional service credit before retirement. Only the paid portion of optional service credit is used to calculate retirement benefits. Refunds, however, must be repaid in full before the service credit can be used.

A member should have any optional service recorded with TRS as soon as possible. If the member waits until retirement to confirm the service, the employer's records may have been lost or destroyed. Without a record of the service, TRS cannot grant the member credit.

Out-of-system service

A member may purchase out-of-system service for full-time, part-time, or substitute public school teaching performed in:

- other states, territories, or dependencies of the United States,
- Chicago public schools, or
- public common schools operated by or under the auspices of the United States or any agency or department of any other state. However, service as an instructor in a United States military instructional center while the member was in the military is not eligible for optional service credit.



A member may also purchase out-of-system service for any period of work in professional speech correction or special education in a public agency within Illinois or any other state, territory, dependency, or possession of the United States.

Out-of-system service for teaching in colleges, universities, and private schools cannot be purchased.

Part-time teaching

All part-time teaching performed after June 30, 1990 is reported to TRS and contributions are remitted by the employer. From July 1, 1969, to June 30, 1990, only part-time teaching on a permanent and continuous basis in a position for which services were expected to be rendered for the entire school term was reportable. Part-time teaching was not reportable prior to July 1, 1969.

For a member to purchase service credit for part-time service prior to July 1990 that was not reportable by an employer, employers must – based on existing school records – verify the applicable days on the Part-Time Service Certification form, which is shown at the end of this chapter, and file the completed form with TRS. Once the credit is verified, the service will be added to the member's record at TRS as "pending service credit" and an accounts receivable balance will be established for the amount due. Contributions are based on the member's creditable earnings.

Substitute teaching, homebound instruction and tutoring

All substitute teaching performed after June 30, 1990 is reported to TRS and contributions are remitted by the employer. A member who performed substitute teaching prior to July 1990 for TRS-covered employers may purchase credit for the fraction of a year that is equal to the ratio of days paid to the number of days in the legal school term at the time the service was performed.

Service credit may be obtained for homebound instruction and for tutoring requiring licensure paid by the employer.

For a member to purchase credit for this service, the employer must – based on existing school records – verify the applicable days on the Substitute or Homebound Service Certification form, which is shown at the end of this chapter, and file the completed form with TRS. Once the credit is verified, the service will be added to the member's record at TRS as "pending service credit" and an accounts receivable balance will be established for the amount due. Contributions are based on the member's creditable earnings.

Military service and post-military teacher retraining

Members may purchase two types of military service:

- military service and post-military teacher retraining that immediately followed Illinois public school teaching, or
- military service that did not immediately follow Illinois public school teaching (typically, military service rendered before a member began teaching).

Costs for the two types of service differ. Members are limited to purchasing a total of five years of credit for active military service and educational retraining programs following military service. Only two of the five years are allowed for military service not immediately following teaching.



Under the provisions of the Uniform Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), a member returning to teaching from military service on or after December 13, 1994, will not be charged interest on military service contributions. A member has up to three times the period of his or her military service, not exceeding five years, to take advantage of USERRA. If a member waits until the USERRA deadline has passed, interest accumulates on those contributions.

Members called to active military duty

Members called to active military duty after 2000-01 should be reported on the Pay-period Report. Please refer to Chapter 5, Reporting, "Military Service," for further guidance regarding TRS members called to active duty after the 2000-01 school year.

Military service immediately following teaching

Up to five years of credit for active military service immediately following teaching may be purchased. To do so, the member must send TRS a copy of U.S. Government Form DD-214 or its equivalent. Credit for this type of service must be purchased *before* the member retires. Once the credit is verified, the service will be added to the member's record at TRS as "pending service credit" and an accounts receivable balance will be established for the amount due.

To be eligible to purchase credit for military service that immediately followed Illinois public school teaching, the member must have entered the military within 12 months of service under either TRS or the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund (CTPF). To purchase credit for an educational retraining program, the training must follow the member's military discharge, be sponsored by the federal government, and prepare the member for a return to teaching.

The contributions due for military service credit that immediately followed Illinois public school teaching is based on a salary rate equal to the member's salary rate at the time he or she entered military service. For each successive school term, the member's contributions to TRS will be based on a salary rate 5 percent higher than the salary rate in the previous school term. Interest is then added from the date the contributions would have been due to the date of payment.

Military service not immediately following teaching

A member may purchase up to two of the five years for active military service not immediately following employment in a position requiring contributions to TRS or the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund (CTPF). To verify this service, the member must send TRS a copy of U.S. Government Form DD-214 or its equivalent. Credit for this type of service must be purchased before the member retires. Once the credit is verified, the service will be added to the member's record at TRS as "pending service credit" and an accounts receivable balance will be established for the amount due.

Military service that does not immediately follow teaching is service that began 12 months or more after teaching or service that was rendered before the member began teaching.

The required contribution for military service not immediately following teaching is based on the total normal cost rate in effect when the service is verified plus interest. The total normal cost rate includes both a member rate and an employer rate. The total normal cost rate is multiplied by the *greater* of:



- the salary rate on the member's last day of teaching prior to military service or
- the salary rate for the member's first year of teaching following the military service.

The salary must have been earned in a position that required mandatory contributions to TRS. Interest is then added from the year of the member's first membership in TRS to the date of payment.

Leave of absence and involuntary layoff

A member may purchase service credit for approved leaves of absence or periods of involuntary layoff. A leave of absence is "approved" if:

- the member did not resign;
- the member's employer promised renewed employment at the end of the leave;
- the member's employer, through its board, officially approved the member's request for leave; or
- the member's leave qualifies as a leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, as certified by the member's employer.

A layoff is "involuntary" if it is due to a reduction in force authorized under the School Code. An involuntary layoff does not include dismissal for cause or other performance-related reasons.

The maximum, combined service credit a member may purchase for leaves of absence, involuntary layoffs, and absences due to pregnancy or adoption is three years.

To receive credit for an approved leave of absence or an involuntary layoff, the member must return to a position covered by TRS or the State Universities Retirement System (SURS) after the leave or layoff. The member must then establish credit for at least the period of the leave or one year, whichever is less.

For a member to purchase credit for a leave of absence, the employer must – based on existing school records – verify the applicable days on the Leave of Absence Certification form, which is shown at the end of this chapter, and file the completed form with TRS. The employer or the member may be asked to file a copy of the board resolution granting the leave.

A member may verify credit for an involuntary layoff by sending TRS a copy of the layoff notice he or she received from the employer engaging in the reduction in force.

Once the credit is verified, the service will be added to the member's record at TRS as "pending service credit" and an accounts receivable balance will be established for the amount due. Contributions to TRS for this service credit are based on a salary rate equal to the member's teaching salary rate immediately preceding the leave.

Beginning with the 2000-01 school year, TRS requested leave of absence information with the Annual Report of Earnings. Complete an Annual Report Leave of Absence Report for all TRScovered members on an unpaid leave of absence during any portion of the school year. For more information regarding the Annual Report Leave of Absence Report included with the Annual Report of Earnings, please refer to Chapter 5, Reporting, "Leave of Absence."

Leave of absence, layoff, and absence due to pregnancy or adoption

A member may purchase credit for periods away from a TRS-covered position prior to July 1, 1983, due to pregnancy or adoption.

To be eligible to purchase this credit, the member must

- have returned to covered employment with either TRS or the State Universities Retirement System (SURS) and
- send TRS a completed Adoption Service Certification form or Pregnancy Service Certification form and all required supporting documentation.

Once the credit is verified, the service will be added to the member's record at TRS as "pending service credit" and an accounts receivable balance will be established for the amount due. Contributions to TRS for this service credit are based on a salary rate equal to the member's teaching salary rate immediately preceding the leave.

If the member has not yet retired, he or she must complete the pregnancy or adoption credit purchase prior to retirement if the credit is to be included in the benefit calculation. Payment made after the member retires will result in the recalculation of the retirement benefit, effective the first of the month following payment.

Annuitants are permitted one opportunity to purchase the credit. Although it is advantageous for an annuitant to purchase the credit as soon as possible, there is no deadline. Both annuitants and members may purchase all or a portion of the credit to which they are entitled, but annuitants tants may make only one purchase.

Three years is the maximum combined service credit that may be purchased for absences due to pregnancy or adoption, leaves of absence, and involuntary layoffs.

Private school credit

The Illinois Pension Code allows a limited opportunity to purchase credit for service as a teacher or administrator in a recognized Illinois private school. **The member must apply for this credit on or before June 30, 2028.** Post-secondary institutions were not included. Retired members cannot purchase this service.

To qualify, the member must have:

- been employed in a private school recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education,
- been certified as a teacher or administrator during the period of private school service,
- completed at least 10 years of contributing TRS service, and
- established at least one full-time salary following the private school service.

For each year of service credit purchased, the member must contribute the normal cost in effect on the date of the application. This rate, which is determined by our actuaries each year, includes both employer and employee contribution rates. The total normal cost rate is multiplied by the annual salary rate during the member's first year of full-time employment in a TRS-covered



position following the private school service. Interest, calculated at the actuarial rate of return, begins on the first date of full-time TRS employment following the private school service and continues until the contribution is paid.

Paid student teaching

Public Act 103-0525, effective Aug. 11, 2023, added a new provision to the Illinois Pension Code to allow TRS members to purchase optional service credit for paid student teaching.

The paid student teaching must have been rendered on or after August 7, 2019, the original effective date of the School Code provision that allows school districts to pay salary to student teachers.

Repayment of a refund

When a member withdraws service by taking a refund of contributions, TRS membership ends and all creditable service is cancelled. Service credit that was previously forfeited by taking a refund may not be used as a basis for payment of benefits until the member:

- repays the *entire* refund with interest from the date the refund was made to the date the refund is repaid and
- completes one year of TRS creditable service following the refunded service. Repayment of the refund is permitted under the provisions of the Illinois Retirement Systems Reciprocal Act after the member completes at least two years of service with a reciprocal system following the date of the refunded service credit.

These requirements must be completed prior to the member's retirement, death, or commencement of disability benefits.

Correcting errors after more than four fiscal years

Section 16-192 of the Illinois Pension Code requires TRS to correct its members' creditable earnings for four fiscal years prior to the fiscal year in which the error was noted. For example, if an error discovered in the 2023-24 school year occurred during the 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 or 2022-23 school years, the employer must contact the TRS Employer Services Department for an Employer's Report of Adjustments to Earnings form. For more information on the Employer's Report of Adjustments to Earnings form, please see Chapter 5, Reporting.

For an error discovered more than four fiscal years after its occurrence, the member may contact TRS for an Unreported TRS Service Certification form. An example of the form is shown at the end of this chapter.

For a member to purchase credit for unreported service, the employer must, based on existing records, verify the days paid and the earnings information on the Unreported TRS Service Certification form, which is shown at the end of this chapter, and file the completed form with TRS. Once the credit is verified, the service will be added to the member's record at TRS as "pending service credit" and an accounts receivable balance will be established for the amount due. Contributions are based on the member's creditable earnings.

Required contribution and interest rates for the purchase of optional service credit

(40 ILCS 5/16-128)

Required contributions are equal to the contributions that would have been required if the service had been rendered under TRS, plus interest. Interest is compounded annually from the date the contributions would have been due to the date of payment according to the following schedule unless otherwise noted in the explanation.

Required TRS contributions as a percentage of earnings are:

- 4 percent, July 1, 1939 to June 30, 1947;
- 5 percent, July 1, 1947 to June 30, 1953;
- 6 percent, July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1959;
- 7 percent, July 1, 1959 to June 30, 1969;
- 7.5 percent, July 1, 1969 to June 30, 1971;
- 8 percent, July 1, 1971 to June 30, 1995;
- 8 percent plus 0.5 percent health insurance contributions, July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1998;
- 9 percent plus 0.5 percent health insurance contributions, July 1, 1998 to December 31, 2001;
- 9 percent plus 0.65 percent health insurance contributions, January 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003;
- 9 percent plus 0.75 percent health insurance contributions, July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2005;
- 9.4 percent plus 0.80 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007;
- 9.4 percent plus 0.84 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2010;
- 9.4 percent plus 0.88 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2012;
- 9.4 percent plus 0.92 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013;
- 9.4 percent plus 0.97 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014;
- 9.4 percent plus 1.02 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015;
- 9.4 percent plus 1.07 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016;
- 9 percent plus 1.12 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017;
- 9 percent plus 1.18 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2017;
- 9 percent plus 1.24 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2021;
- 9 percent plus 0.90 percent health insurance contributions July 1, 2021 to present.

Contributions were subject to a maximum amount until 1961. Minimum contributions were in force continuously.



Interest, compounded annually, is computed as follows:

- 3 percent annually for periods before July 1, 1965;
- 4 percent annually, July 1, 1965, through June 30, 1977;
- 5 percent annually, July 1, 1977, through June 30, 1981; and
- 6 percent annually beginning July 1, 1981.

The 2.2 formula

The 2.2 formula improves the retirement benefit for TRS members by accelerating the rate at which future retirement benefits accrue. Formerly, retirement benefits accrued at a slower rate in the early years as an educator and at a faster rate as service credit increased. The table below compares the previous four-step formula to the 2.2 formula.

Annual Accrual Rate

Years of service	Four-step formula	2.2% formula
First 10 years	1.67%	2.2%
Second 10 years	1.9%	2.2%
Third 10 years	2.1%	2.2%
Years beyond 30	2.3%	2.2%

2.2 upgrade

Credit earned before July 1, 1998, may be upgraded to the 2.2 formula by making an optional payment. If a member does not upgrade pre-July 1998 service, benefits for this service will be based on the four-step formula. The upgrade to the 2.2 formula is entirely voluntary and may be elected by calling the TRS Member Services Department. See Chapter 10, Retirement Benefits for an example of the upgrade cost.

Purchasing credit for optional service

Several payment options – lump-sum, installments, direct rollover – are available when a member wants to purchase credit for optional service, to repay refunded service, and to upgrade pre-1998 service to the 2.2 flat rate formula.

Employer's payment of member's 2.2 upgrade balance or optional contribution balance

An employer may pay all or part of the member's 2.2 upgrade balance or optional contribution balance directly to TRS. If an employer is paying a member's 2.2 upgrade, TRS can accept only one employer payment per year. The Employer Payment Coupon, which is shown at the end of this chapter, must be remitted with the payment. The employer must indicate on the form if the payment is a before-tax or after-tax payment.

If the employer chooses to "pick up" the amount on a before-tax basis in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code, Section 414(h), the amount is not included in the member's gross taxable income for income tax purposes.



Federal guidelines require that a pick up authorization be included in either a collective bargaining agreement, a contract, or a resolution because the employer payment is not of a statutory nature. The authorization should read similar to the following language:

The contributions for the upgrade required under the Pension Code, Section 16-129.1 (40 ILCS 5/16-129.1), although designated as employee contributions, are being paid by {*name of employer*} in lieu of contributions by the employees and are being picked up pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, Section 414(h)(2), as amended. The employees covered by the {*collective bargaining agreement, contract, resolution, etc.*} shall not have the option of choosing to receive the contributed amounts directly instead of having them paid by the employer to the Teachers' Retirement System.

The above language should also indicate the employee or group of employees for whom the pick up will be made.

After-tax payments

After-tax payments are quick and simple. Full-time, part-time, and substitute teachers are eligible. Once a member has established their purchase cost by contacting TRS, they simply mail their check, include their Social Security number, and tell TRS how to apply their payment.

Lump-sum or installment payments

TRS accepts personal checks, money orders, or cashiers' checks as either a lump-sum payment or installment payments using after-tax dollars. Members may also make payments to TRS from their bank accounts online if they do not wish to mail a check. Cash and credit card payments are not accepted.

A member may make a lump-sum payment or installment payments directly to TRS when purchasing optional service credit or repaying a refund. Each installment payment must be a minimum of \$50. If the total balance due is less than \$50, the member's payment must be for the full amount due.

A member may make a **lump-sum** payment directly to TRS when purchasing credit for optional service, repaying refunded service, or upgrading pre-1998 service to the 2.2 flat rate formula.

A check(s) payable to THIS Fund is required for health insurance contributions due for periods of optional service after June 30, 1995.

Before-tax payments

Rollovers

Rollovers allow a member to transfer pre-tax funds from many different types of retirement plans to TRS to pay for credit for optional service, repay refunded service, or upgrade pre-1998 service to the 2.2 flat rate formula without loss of tax benefits. In many cases, this is a real advantage. A member's current custodian must agree to make the transfer, and the member must follow specific requirements set forth in federal tax regulations. TRS will accept rollovers from most qualified retirement plans. Rollover payments are processed after TRS receives a completed Rollover Certification form. For more information, call 877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS).



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2815 W Washington St | PO Box 19253 Springfield, IL 62794-9253 888-678-3675 | FAX: 217-753-0969 employers@trsil.org http://www.trsil.org

Substitute or Homebound Service Certification

(Prior to July 1, 1990)

	Social Security number:	999-99-9999
Suzy A Smith	Date of birth:	01-01-1947
123 Sunny St	Home telephone number:	(123) 456-7890
Pleasanton IL 00000	Work telephone number:	(123) 987-6543
	Work extension number:	222

Complete this certification to claim service credit in the Teachers' Retirement System for substitute or homebound teaching that was completed in any Illinois public school covered by TRS.

Other names under which member taught

Member signature

Date

School Official Certification School year Number of Number of Total number **Gross** actual full days Daily rate Total annual beginning partial days of days teacher earnings for school term July 1 worked worked was paid hours worked (2) (3) (5) (7) (1)(4) (6) Credit is granted for each day or partial day worked. A partial day is defined as any day taught that was less than a full Box 3: school day. Do not combine partial days into full-day equivalents. Total days should equal column 2 + column 3 unless some of the partial days were concurrent. Please note these Box 4: exceptions on the form. If total days equal 100 or more, send supporting documentation used to determine days. Box 5: If the member's daily rate varied during one school term, use a separate line for each compensation rate. I certify that the information shown is correct as shown in our existing school records. If requested, I will provide this documentation. By signing, I certify that this information is correct. I am aware that pursuant to the Illinois Pension Code, 40 ILCS 5/1-135, any person who knowingly makes any false statement or falsifies or permits to be falsified any record in an attempt to defraud the Teachers' Retirement System is guilty of a Class 3 felony. Please be advised that if the TRS Board has a reasonable

defraud the Teachers' Retirement System is guilty of a Class 3 felony. Please be advised that if the TRS Board has a reasonable suspicion that a false record has been filed with the System, it is required to report the matter to the appropriate state's attorney for investigation.

School official's signature	School official's title		Date
Name of school district	County	Dist. no.	Telephone number
Address	City, state, ZIP		

Office Use Only:		
Reviewed by	Date	Adjustment number

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TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS



2815 W Washington St | PO Box 19253 Springfield, IL 62794-9253 888-678-3675 | FAX: 217-753-0969 employers@trsil.org http://www.trsil.org

Leave of Absence Certification

Suzy A Smith 123 Sunny St			Social Security number:				
			Date of birth:		999-99-9999 01-01-1947		
			Home telephone number:		(123) 456-7890		
Pleasanton IL 00000)		Work telephone number:		(123) 987-6543		
			Work extension number:	222			
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Springfield, IL	FAX: 217-753-0969 rsil.org		oluntary	/ Layoff	Certificatior
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Member signat	ture					Date	
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Type of teaching FT/PT SUB (1)	School year l	beginning July 1 employment To (3)	Number of days in school term (4)	Actual number of days paid (5)	Gross salary rate for school term (6)	Gross actual earnings for school term (7)	PT/SUB ONLY Total annual hours worked (8)
Box 5: Credit i	is granted for e	ach day or partial	dav worked. De	o not combine i	partial days into fu	ll-dav equivalents	
Box 6: If the r rate.	nember's daily	rate for substitute	e teaching varied	during one sch	ool term, use a sepa	arate line for each co	ompensation
school records, this documenta ILCS 5/1-135, defraud the Tea	I certify that ation. By signin any person wh achers' Retirer	the information shing, I certify that the knowingly makes ment System is guided by the second structure of the second structur	nown is correct a his information is es any false state ilty of a Class 3	s shown in our correct. I am a ement or falsifie felony. Please b	I this information is existing school reco ware that pursuant t as or permits to be find the advised that if the poort the matter to the	ords. If requested, I to the Illinois Pension alsified any record the TRS Board has a r	will provide on Code, 40 in an attempt to reasonable
School official	C .		School of	fficial's title	County	Date District n	0.
Address					2.5unty	District II	~.



TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS



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Paid Student Teaching Certification

Illinois public	St. IL 00000 ation is complete c school covered		Date of Home Work Work e credit in the		ıber: ber: ber: ement System for j		
Member - C	omplete Section	A and send to the					
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Report inform information for considered fu submitted alo	nation on a fisca or the contract p ll-time teaching. ong with this fo	l year basis begini beriod within the Supporting docu rm in order to gr	ning July 1 and fiscal year. Em Imentation, su ant service cre	ployment of fo ch as contract edit.	our or more clock l s, payroll records,	ods longer than a sc hours per day, five W-2s, or job descr	days per week is iptions, must be
Type of teaching		eginning July 1 mployment	Number of days in	Actual number of	Gross salary rate for	Gross actual earnings for	PT/SUB ONLY Total annual
FT/PT SUB (1)	From (2)	To (3)	school term (4)	days paid (5)	school term (6)	school term (7)	hours worked (8)
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School officia		ice Certification}	School c	official's title		Date	
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Address			City, sta	te, ZIP	1	Telepho	ne number
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The district superintendent, business manager, or payroll or member's optional contribution balance or payment of the		oon to report employer payments of a
Name Suzy A. Smith	Social Security number 999-99-9999	Account number 77777
Employer name All American School District 1		TRS Code 999-9999
Amount Enclosed: \$	Check Number:	
 The action of the employer picking up the payme agreement, or a resolution, dated This payment is an after-tax payment. NOTE: In either case, the payment made by the employe or with the member's last regular paycheck. If reportable as creditable earnings, TRS Member 	r on behalf of the indicated me	mber is creditable earnings if paid prior to
THIS Fund Contributions are due. Do not remit w Name of district superintendent, business manager, or pay		amounts with your next EFT remittance.
Signature of district superintendent, business manager, or	payroll officer	Title
• This payment should be made separately. Do not inclucontribution payments.		nthly Employer Bill or any other
 Make your check payable to Teachers' Retirement S Teachers' Retirement System 2815 West Washington P.O. Box 19253 Springfield, IL 62794-9253 If remitting by overnight express, mail to: Teachers' Retirement System 2815 West Washington Springfield, IL 62702-3397 		
 Make your check payable to Teachers' Retirement S Teachers' Retirement System 2815 West Washington P.O. Box 19253 Springfield, IL 62794-9253 If remitting by overnight express, mail to: Teachers' Retirement System 2815 West Washington 	this coupon for your records.	ns.