

NC FIRE SERVICE LEGISLATIVE DAY DISCUSSION POINTS



May 15, 2019

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Be polite and engaging
- Talk about your home district
- Relate the issue to how it affects your department and personnel
- Give follow-up contact information
- Thank them for their work
- Leave handout material

SUPPORT SENATE BILL 349 – PROTECT BENEFIT FOR FIREFIGHTERS ACT

This bill increases the Gross Premium Assessment on Fire and Lightning Insurance from .074 to .125. This will provide incremental increases in the Firefighter's Relief Fund, Volunteer Safety Workers Compensation Fund, and Volunteer Fire Department Grants. Most importantly, it will provide necessary increases that can support stabilization, and perhaps growth in our Fire and Rescue Workers Pension fund. Currently there is a deficit to the amount needed in the pension program.

- A small increase in the GPT from .75 to 1.125 is approximately \$1 to \$4 on a home owners insurance policy.
- Volunteers save the State over \$1 billion in local tax dollars.
- Over 80% of the fire departments in North Carolina have improved their insurance ratings over the last 10 years, saving homeowners many times more than this small increase with cost. This same reduction in insurance costs has reduced the amount of money going into these funds, so improving our ratings has hurt our benefit programs.

SUPPORT SENATE BILL 416 – RECRUIT/RETAIN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

This bill provides a loan forgiveness program for firefighters taking degree work in Fire Protection at the Department of Community Colleges; provides free hunting and fishing licenses for being a volunteer firefighter; a reduced property tax to eligible volunteer firefighters; and increases the Fire and Rescue Pension to \$180 for fire and

rescue personnel.



- Volunteers save the State over \$1 billion in local tax dollars annually.
- We haven't had a pension increase since 2008, and it was only \$3 then.
- Everyone's talking about recruitment and retention issues, and this is a KEY component.
- 38,342 volunteer and 13,234 career firefighters benefit from this bill in some way.
- Roughly 40% of volunteers would benefit from Hunting and Fishing licenses.

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 159/SENATE BILL 396 – SEARCH AND RESCUE FUNDS

Provides funding for NC Search and Rescue Teams through the Department Public Safety. These teams provide specialized rescue to all areas of the State upon request.

- This funding is currently in the House budget, and it is critical to keep it there.

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 278 – STUDY PARITY FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

This bill provides a committee of combined Senate and House members to study firefighters in the State and Local Government Retirement System, possibly allowing them to retire at age 50 with 30 years' service. The study considers a wage supplement until they reach the age, they are eligible for unreduced social security benefits, and how to fund the provision. Law enforcement officers have had this benefit since the 1980's. The supplement allows a firefighter to afford retirement until they can receive social security benefits.

- Firefighting is a stressful job, and dangerous. After 30 years of service firefighters' chances of heart attack, contracting cancer, and physical injury go up dramatically.
- This issue deserves a fair review and passage.

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 466 – FIREFIGHTERS' LINE OF DUTY DISEASES/FUNDS

This bill adds 3 additional types of cancers bringing the total covered for Line of Duty Death to seven (7). It also appropriates funds for the additional LODD's. This is currently included in the House Budget.

- This funding is currently in the House budget, and it is critical to keep it there.
- Firefighters have an 18% higher rate of occurrence in many of these cancer types.
- This bill simply adds 3 additional types and clarifies one.

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 622 – PROVIDES WORKERS COMP FOR PTS IN FIRST RESPONDERS

Provides Workers Compensation for PTS in firefighters, law enforcement, and other emergency responders within 1 year of occurrence for certain types of exposures.

- PTS and suicide related incidents are increasing dramatically in the emergency services.
- PTS is now only covered if it is in conjunction with a physical injury.
- The bill provides protection against fraudulent uses.

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 520 – FIREFIGHTERS FIGHTING CANCER ACT

Creates a presumption for certain type cancers prevalent in the fire service, they are considered work related and are covered by Workers Compensation.

- Firefighters have an 18% higher rate of occurrence in many of these cancer types.
- This bill puts the burden of proof on the carrier, and not the firefighter.
- The bill provides protection against fraudulent uses by requiring physicals.

SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 213– PROVIDE EQUAL INCOME TAX TREATMENT

This bill creates an equal treatment of Government employees in North Carolina by phasing in the same income tax exemptions for State and Local Employees that were vested before 1989. This is a huge benefit for our career, state, and local firefighters. This benefit includes all state, local, and military employees in NC.

OPPOSE HOUSE BILL 6125 AND SB 566 – NC CONSUMER FIREWORKS SAFETY ACT

Increases the size, use and availability of consumer fireworks in NC. This bill will result in increased injuries and fires across NC.

- The bill does not increase safety, but actually will increase injuries and fires

OPPOSE SB 374 – REPEAL RISKY RETIREMENT PAYMENTS

This bill will eliminate three benefit payment options to members who retire after July 1, 2020. The payment options being eliminated are: Option 4: Social Security Leveling; Option 6-2: Modified Joint & Survivor – 100% for named beneficiary with pop-up to maximum allowance if beneficiary predeceases the member; and Option 6-3: Modified Joint & Survivor – 50% for named beneficiary with pop-up to maximum allowance if beneficiary predeceases the member.

- These are benefits for our retired career employees, and should not be removed.



**Add Your
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