



Doug M. Mongold
President

Harry T. Shockey
Executive Secretary

Legislative Alert

Dear Fellow Firefighters:

I am contacting you to inform you about the last legislative session; it was a very bad year for the Volunteer Fire Service. I am asking each and every one of you to please become involved and join our association. We need your support and help. When we have a bill we want to pass or kill; we need for firemen around the state to get in contact with their legislators. We have a web site that can be used to do this; it is <http://www.wvsfa.com/>.

During the last legislative session the first problem we had was SB-667 Relating to Policemen's and Firemen's Pension and Relief Funds. The \$2.65 million for FY08 and FY09 represent a redirection of funds from the Teachers Retirement System to the Municipal Policemen's and Firemen's Pension and Relief Funds. This change will put back in place the distribution that occurred prior to 1990 for these revenues, and the \$12.68 million dollars that will be generated from the .45% of one percent premium surcharge (33-3-33) will be invested by the Investment Management Board for five years and then will be distributed (one fifth of the total fund) to municipal policemen's and firemen's pensions and relief funds with the interest earned therein from 5 years worth of collections and interest. The \$12.68 million figure does not include any interest earned therein for the 5 years the bill would require the funds to be invested with the IMB prior to distribution. It would generate \$15.33 million into their pension plan with us getting nothing. We were able to stop this bill in House Finance; there wasn't a vote against it in the Senate.

The second problem we had was SB-571 Relating to Certain Firefighter's Workers' Compensation Benefits. This bill passed and was signed by the Governor. This bill creates a rebuttal presumption that cardiovascular injury, disease, pulmonary disease or death of a professional firefighter is an occupational injury and nothing is in this bill for volunteers. The Insurance Commissioner shall study the effects of the rebuttal presumptions created in this subsection on the premiums charged for workers' compensation for professional municipal firefighters; the probable effects of extending these presumptions to volunteer firefighters; and the overall impact of the risk management programs, wage replacements, premium calculations, number of hours worked per volunteer, treatment of non active or "social" members of a volunteer crew, and the feasibility of combining various volunteer departments under a single policy on the availability and cost of providing workers' compensation coverage to volunteer firefighters. The Insurance Commissioner shall file the report with the Joint Committee on Government and Finance no later than the first day of December, two thousand eight. This could cost us some benefits and could raise our premiums. SB-571 passed the Senate with all voting for it. It was amended in the House to include volunteers and it passed the House without a vote against it. It was put into a conference committee; the conference committee took the volunteers out and created the study. The vote on the conference committee report is attached; the yeas vote adopted the report and took us out and the nays would have sent the bill back to the Senate with us in it and they would have had to accept it or reject it. If they

rejected it the bill would have died. Those that voted Nay are true friends because they didn't want this bill to pass without including the volunteers.

We did have some successes. HCR-17 Requesting the Joint Committee on Government and Finance to study the recruitment, retention and value of volunteer firefighters in the State of West Virginia. It was approved and the study will start next month. SB-224 Creating Joint Emergency Services Act of 2008 was introduced by the Governor which would have allowed County Commissioners to combine Fire and EMS Boards. Jefferson County was the only one in the state that wanted this; we were able to make a local bill out of this so it only applied to Jefferson County. The bill passed just applying to Jefferson County

Again I ask for your membership and help; we need to all stand together for the Volunteer Fire Service. I am asking everyone that belongs to this association to help us get every Volunteer Fire Department in the state involved in this association; I would also like to see every department in the state send representatives to the convention this year that is going to be held in Charleston, WV August 21st, 22nd, & 23rd. You can visit our web page listed above to get complete information. During the convention we as a group can decide what we may want to get accomplished during the next legislative session. It also gives everyone the opportunity to ask questions and get answers from the association officer's, fire commission members, and the Fire Marshall's Office.

Remember united we stand and divide we fall, so let's stand up and be counted...

Sincerely yours,
Doug M. Mongold
President
WVSFA