



September 27th, 2019

Everyone,

For those who have not seen the CSFA Convention booklet that was published for our annual convention held earlier this month in Shelton, I have reprinted here the summary Legislative Report that I submitted:

Lewis Clark, Legislative Committee Chairman

Connecticut State Firefighters Association

P.O. Box 9

Mansfield Center, CT 06250

September 3rd, 2019

Subject: 2019 Legislative Summary Report

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Prior to the start of the 2019 legislative session of the Connecticut General Assembly, a meeting of the Fire/EMS Caucus of legislators was held on December 12th, 2018. Representatives Pat Boyd (D) and Ben McGorty (R) organized the meeting and co-chaired the bipartisan caucus for the long session. Representative Michelle Cook (D) and Senator George Logan (R) were selected and announced as vice-chairs for their respective parties. At this first meeting, the CSFA list of legislative priorities was presented to the legislators on the Fire/EMS Caucus. The list of legislative priorities were agreed upon by CSFA member representatives who attended the association's Annual Legislative Meeting the previous November. By the end of the 2019 session, three meetings of the Fire/EMS Caucus were held and the group continued to report a membership of more than 40 partisan members. Throughout the session, media recordings of these caucus meetings were available online to the public on the Connecticut Network (CT-N) website. It should be noted that the internet links for the Fire/EMS Caucus meetings received

thousands of hits. We believe this social media publicity had a positive impact on our efforts this past year.

The 2019 legislative long session began on January 9th and continued until June 5th. During the session, 120 proposed bills related to public safety in the Connecticut House and Senate were tracked. These bills either directly or indirectly influenced the Fire Service. During this past session, CSFA actively pursued the following top legislative priorities:

- Continuation of funding through bonding for building Regional Fire Schools
- Continuation of funding of the operating budgets of the Regional Fire Schools
- Passage of the PTSD Bill (S.B. 164)
- Block attempts to legalize consumer grade fireworks in Connecticut (S.B. 664)
- Block attempts to legalize mobile retail gasoline re-fueling in Connecticut (H.B. 7299, section 4)

By mid-April, the broad list of tracked bills was reduced to include only bills that successfully passed Joint Favorably out of their respective legislative committees, and, the number of tracked bills was reduced to 30. By the end of the session, 11 of these proposed bills were passed into law:

H.B. 5125 - AN ACT INCREASING THE PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT FOR CERTAIN FIRST RESPONDERS. To increase the property tax abatement for certain first responders from one thousand dollars to one thousand five hundred dollars.

H.B. 5455 - AN ACT CONCERNING QUALIFIED FOREST FIRE FIGHTERS. To allow the state forest fire warden to supplement existing staff resources with individuals who meet certain federal forest firefighter training and qualification requirements.

H.B. 5575 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSPENSION OF DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS FOR FIRESTARTING BEHAVIOR TREATMENT. To permit the court to suspend a delinquency proceeding for certain fire-starting offenses and order a child to participate in a fire-starting behavior treatment program.

H.B. 6146 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF CERTIFICATION COURSES IN CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING COURSES IN THE USE OF AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF FIRST AID. To expand certification courses in cardiopulmonary resuscitation for lifeguards and education and training courses in the use of automatic external defibrillators and the administration of first aid.

H.B. 7229 - AN ACT CONCERNING FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS IN RENTAL UNITS. To modify existing requirements for landlords to provide notice of fire suppression systems to tenants.

H.B. 7394 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN A FIRST RESPONDER AND A PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER. To ensure the confidentiality of certain communications that take place between a first responder and a peer support team member.

S.B. 164 - AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS, MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND WELLNESS TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS, PAROLE OFFICERS AND FIREFIGHTERS. To expand workers' compensation coverage in certain situations that result in mental or emotional impairment.

S.B. 380 - AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND WELLNESS TRAINING AND SUICIDEPREVENTION FOR POLICE OFFICERS. To promote mental health and wellness training and suicideprevention for police officers in the state.

S.B. 556 - AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR CERTAIN RETIRED PUBLIC SAFETY EMPLOYEES. To permit any municipality, by a two-thirds vote of its legislative body, to annually pay a retired public safety employee who suffered serious and permanent bodily injury in the line of duty and who retired as a result thereof, up to the age of sixty-five, the difference between such employee's disability pay and such employee's regular rate of pay prior to retirement.

S.B. 795 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS. To protect physicians and other health care professionals who use automated external defibrillators in the scope of their practice or employment against civil liability when the automatic external defibrillator malfunctions.

S.B. 1082 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONSOLIDATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINTS. To require the Division of State-Wide Emergency Telecommunications to develop additional incentives for the regionalization of public safety answering points and make recommendations to the General Assembly for how to remove barriers to the consolidation of such answering points.

H.B. 7424 - Provided funding for the Middlesex Regional Fire School project.

In addition to regularly meeting with the Joint Council throughout the session, meetings were attended with the CSFA membership, the U.P.F.F.A., the Connecticut Fire Chiefs, the Career Chiefs, the Irregulars, Connecticut Fire Marshals and the Fire Department Instructors. Reports on legislative news and progress for the Fire Service were prepared and distributed to each of these groups. Progress of legislative bills impacting the Fire Service was submitted weekly for publication to the State Fire Administrator's internet listserv, and on our website. The CSFA webmaster continued to use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate progress and news related to the bills that were tracked. Throughout the session, legislators were lobbied to keep the financial needs of the Fire Service included in all proposed budgets from the Appropriations Committee and from the members of General Assembly.

One of the most important successes of this past legislative session was the continued funding of the operating budgets of the Regional Fire Schools. Once again, the Fire/EMS Caucus was an integral part of educating members of the General Assembly's House and Senate regarding the importance of funding the necessary Fire Service education for recruits as well as the required continuing education for both veteran and career firefighters.

Additionally, the passage of S.B. 164, "The PTSD Bill", was a tremendous victory for both volunteer and career firefighters and also for fire-based EMS first responders. Next year, we

hope that the mental health coverage that this law now provides will be expanded to include all EMS first responders in Connecticut.

It should also be noted that for the second year in a row, a bill that attempted to legalize dangerous consumer grade fireworks in Connecticut (S.B. 664) was successfully blocked from passage into legislation. Also, the proposed legislation that would have legalized mobile retail gasoline sales in Connecticut (H.B. 7299, section 4) was successfully blocked. Once again, the effort to keep these bills from becoming law were excellent examples of successful cooperation between multiple Fire Service organizations in Connecticut with the goal of keeping life, limb and property safe in our state.

I would like to thank the leadership of the Connecticut Fire Service organizations that supported the efforts that successfully represented the Connecticut State Firefighters Association this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Leon Collins

Legislative Representative

Connecticut State Firefighters Association

I would also like to remind members of the Fire Service that funding for Public Act 16-10 (The Cancer Bill) went “live” this past summer. Section 4, paragraph B of the legislation says:

(b) A firefighter who is approved for wage replacement benefits by the subcommittee pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall be eligible for such benefits on and after July 1, 2019, and for a period determined by the subcommittee, provided such period shall not exceed twenty-four months.

I suggest that everyone take a look at the entire legislation once again to review the major points of the law that now provides coverage for members of the Fire Service, both volunteer and career who qualify.

The following link contains the entire text of Public Act 16-10:

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2016/ACT/pa/2016PA-00010-R00HB-05262-PA.htm>

I have reached out to the Cancer Fund subcommittee chairman because a few people have started to ask questions about the process to apply for the wage replacement benefit. The chairman reports that the subcommittee is still working with the state to outline the application process and to decide the necessary forms to fill out in order to receive the benefit. I will report any new information I receive with regard to the application process in future CSFA legislative updates.

There was one piece of legislation that I neglected to include in the list of bills that were passed this past session. The “Blue and Red Lights Bill” that was mentioned earlier this year (previously H.B. 5658) in this CSFA update goes into effect on October 1, 2019. The bill including the language that affects the Fire

Service was changed to H.B. 7140 and passed as Public Act 19-161. The language that pertains to members of the Fire Service is in section 10 and 11 of the legislation. The following link contains the entire text of Public Act 19-161:

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2019/ACT/pa/pdf/2019PA-00161-R00HB-07140-PA.pdf>

Finally, our annual CSFA Legislative Meeting will be held on November 21, 2019 at Company 3 in Wethersfield.

Hope to see you at the Fallen Firefighter Memorial Service at the Connecticut Fire Academy at 12:30pm on Sunday, September, 29, 2019.

I will publish my next scheduled CSFA Legislative Update on the last Friday in October.

Sincerely,

Leon Collins

Legislative Representative

The Connecticut State Firefighters Association

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Sincerely,

Leon Collins

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