

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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Many Bills Still Moving as Session Winds Down

The 2024 spring legislative session is well past the half-way point, with adjournment scheduled for May 24th. Hot topics including exemptions to the Paid Leave for All Workers Act and firefighter recruitment and retention have not seen legislative action this spring. But many bills of interest are still moving through the process. Here we highlight a few of those bills that fire protection districts will want to monitor.

House Bill 3908 would create the Firefighter Paid Family Leave Act, providing six weeks of paid leave for firefighters for the birth of a child, adoption of a child, foster care placement of a child 18 years or younger and 18 years or older for a special needs foster child, and to help care for a family member experiencing a serious health issue. The bill is supported by the AFFI and is opposed by the Illinois Municipal League.

House Bill 4045 as amended will allow any person legally authorized to work in the United States to apply to become a firefighter. The intent of the bill is to allow non-citizens who may legally work to become first responders. The bill is supported by the Illinois Municipal League, the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association and the Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts.

House Bill 4321 would establish a presumption that a career firefighter or police officer who becomes disabled because of exposure to and contraction of

COVID-19 was injured in the line of duty and is entitled to receive a duty disability benefit to downstate police officers and fire fighters. The bill is effective retroactively to March 9, 2020.

House Bill 4460 would require insurance coverage for joint mental health therapy for police and firefighters and their spouse or living partner. As drafted, the bill does not apply to fire protection districts.

House Bill 5050 makes changes to the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act, including penalties for failure to submit reports to the county and requiring that county reports include plans to reduce the number of governmental units within a county by 10 to 20 percent. The bill is strongly opposed by multiple local government organizations including IAFPD.

In the Senate, several bills impacting fire protection districts are on track for passage. Senate Bill 2879 is an initiative of IAFPD. As amended, the bill will increase the bidding threshold for equipment in Section 11k of the Fire Protection District Act from the current limit of \$20,000 to \$50,000. The amendment represents an agreement between IAFPD and the Ironworkers Union, which voiced concerns regarding increasing the threshold for construction projects. This change will allow fire protection districts to maximize their use of OSFM Small Equipment

grants without needing to publish and put equipment purchases out for sealed bid.

Senate Bill 3163 is an initiative of the Northern Alliance. As amended, the bill will allow fire protection districts to accumulate funds in their ambulance fund for the purposes of acquiring, building, or maintaining real property, procuring emergency medical service vehicles or equipment, or training to provide essential emergency medical services to the community. It will allow for fund accumulation in the emergency and rescue fund for similar purposes. A House companion bill was filed as House Bill 4359.

Senate Bill 3402 was special legislation introduced to facilitate the transfer of ambulance responsibilities from a named fire protection district to a particular county through an intergovernmental agreement in the sponsor's legislative district. At IAFPD's request, the bill will be amended in the House to revise the wording in the bill to more generic language that would make this process available to any other district in a similar situation. ■