

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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Spring 2025 Legislative Overview

T During a spring session dominated by the state budget, House and Senate leadership have acted to limit the number of bills being considered in each chamber. But even with bill limits, several pieces of legislation impacting fire protection districts have been introduced and are still moving through the legislative process.

IAFPD has introduced House Bill 3388, sponsored by Representative Dan Swanson (R-Woodhull). This bill includes any recreational off-highway vehicle, all-terrain vehicle, watercraft, or aircraft that is designated or authorized by proper local authorities for fire department use in the definition of “fire department vehicle”. HB 3388 builds on legislation passed in 2022 as Public Act 102-240 to authorize use of these vehicles by police departments and trailer legislation enacted in 2024 to authorize use by sheriffs’ departments. House Bill 3388 passed the House unanimously on April 10, 2024 and is being sponsored in the Senate by Senator Neil Anderson (R-Aledo), a firefighter.

Another bill introduced by Representative Swanson will provide higher education credit to firefighters for their professional training. House Bill 1149 creates the Educational Credit for Firefighting Experience Act, requiring colleges and universities to adopt a policy to award academic credit for firefighter training by June 1, 2027. Swanson sees higher education credit as a recruitment and retention tool. Like HB 3388, HB 1149 was approved unanimously in the House and is also sponsored by Senator Anderson in the Senate. Both bills have multiple bipartisan co-sponsors.

Representative Patrick Sheehan (R-Homer Glen) has introduced House Bill 1938, which amends the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act to exempt fire protection districts. Sheehan introduced this bill along with House Bill 1104, which would have made the Act permissive rather than mandatory. The sponsor said the bills came out of a meeting he had with his local fire departments and HB 1938 has generated broad support from fire protection districts as well as the Association.

Legislation to allow fire departments to charge for lift assist calls has made significant progress this session. House Bill 2336 as amended provides that a municipality or fire protection district may fix, charge, and collect reasonable fees from an assisted living facility or nursing home facility for every lift-assist service after the 6th lift assist service provided. Language specifying six “free” assists was negotiated by the Illinois Municipal League and the Illinois Healthcare Association, representing nursing homes. It is unclear if the amendment removes all opposition to the bill, but this is the first session that the bill has progressed beyond the committee phase. House Bill 2336 is being carried by Representative Anthony DeLuca (D-Chicago Heights) and Senator Patrick Joyce (D-Kankakee).

Two companion bills have been filed to allow fire protection districts to use design-build procurement for construction projects. House Bill 2894 and Senate Bill 1827 incorporate language suggested by IAFPD, who worked with the sponsors and proponents to ensure that allowing design build procurement remains consistent with competitive

bidding requirements in Section 11k of the Fire Protection District Act. Both bills are supported by IAFPD and the Northern Alliance of Fire Protection Districts.

Finally, three measures aimed at evaluating and improving first responder wellness are on track for eventual passage. House Bill 2551, sponsored by Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar (D-Chicago) will make changes to the First Responders Suicide Prevention Act, adding representation for an organization that provides mental health training and support for first responders as well as representation for organizations that advocate on behalf of public safety telecommunicators. Guerrero-Cuellar spouse is a first responder, and she has served as a champion for police, fire and EMS personnel in the House.

Senate Bill 1446 sponsored by Senator Cristina Castro (D-Elgin) will require the Office of the State Fire Marshal to track and record the manner of death for all firefighters in Illinois, including suicide and cancer deaths, and Senate Bill 1903 sponsored by Senator Sally Turner (R-Lincoln) creates the Firefighter Health and Wellness Act, which will establish a unit within the Illinois Department of Public Health to study to the impact of PFAS exposure and the rising incidence of cancer among firefighters in Illinois.

Despite bill limits and budget uncertainty, the Illinois General Assembly remains responsive to the concerns of first responders and fire protection districts through the sponsorship of these bills. As always, we encourage members to actively advocate on bills that support our members and remain engaged in the legislative process. ■