

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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101st General Assembly Takes Office

With the New Year come a new General Assembly and many new faces to the Capitol. In the two years since the beginning of the previous 100th General Assembly, the House and Senate have seen a turnover in membership of twenty-five percent. While turnover is certainly normal, twenty-five percent is significant. One in four legislators are brand new to Springfield and the legislative process.

As a result of this turnover, IAFPD and the fire service organizations have lost a number of longtime champions along with their institutional knowledge of our issues. Educating freshmen legislators will take time and effort, and every organization that lobbies under the dome will need to work at rebuilding political capital. 2019 also marks the first time since 1995 that the same political party controls all constitutional offices and both chambers of the General Assembly. Democrat lawmakers are eager to capitalize on this moment, meaning we could see an increase in the number of bills filed for consideration. Legislative success will depend on getting the ear of legislators who will be dealing with thousands of bills and amendments, many of whom are new.

There will also be changes in agencies and departments that the Association interacts with as Governor J.B. Pritzker takes office this month. All of these factors may pose challenges, but also opportunities for IAFPD to forge new partnerships, advance initiatives to benefit our members and get a fresh start

for bills that were not successful in years past.

Legislation related to publication requirements is a common theme for IAFPD in 2019. The Association is looking at a proposal to change the requirement that bid notices be published in a daily newspaper of general circulation. In the age of digital media, fewer newspapers publish on a daily basis, making it difficult for some districts to meet the posting requirement. A similar proposal to eliminate the requirement that notice of promotion examinations be published, and to clarify that notice of examinations does not need to be published in a newspaper of general circulation is being considered for introduction.

Two other publication initiatives, one a carryover and one new may be included in the IAFPD legislative agenda this spring. Legislation introduced previously to eliminate the requirement that fire protection districts publish their annual budget and appropriation ordinance may be filed again. The Illinois Press Association has indicated they will oppose the legislation, but as more information is offered and consumed online, we believe their arguments for publication are outdated.

IAFPD is also looking at changes to the Public Funds Statement Publication Act to exempt units of government that are required to comply with the Government Account Audit Act. The time may be ripe to look at these multiple and overlapping publication and transparency

requirements for local governments and determine if there are ways to provide information at a reduced cost to our districts.

Another effort to save money is potential legislation to allow fire protection districts to use joint purchasing programs that are not based in Illinois. This will resolve questions from districts that wish to use out-of-state purchasing consortiums, which is not currently allowed under the Joint Purchasing Act.

Bills previously introduced on behalf of IAFPD will again be considered by the Association's Legislative Committee for presentation, including changes to the annual training requirements for pension trustees to be spread over a two year period, an initiative to revise the way temporary total benefits are awarded to volunteer firefighters injured in connection with an accident, and a measure to create liability for building managers and owners for conditions that result in injury to a firefighter. These bills as well as other ideas may be introduced again with the hope that they will receive renewed consideration in the new 101st General Assembly. ■