

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6220

As Passed House:

February 28, 1996

Title: An act relating to increased benefits for volunteer fire fighters.

Brief Description: Increasing disability and death benefits for volunteer fire fighters.

Sponsors: Senators Owen, Moyer, Swecker, Sutherland, Drew, Rinehart, Goings, Snyder, Quigley, Haugen, Winsley, Oke, Roach, Bauer, Prentice, Hargrove, Sheldon, Wojahn, Finkbeiner and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/21/96, 2/24/96 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/96, 94-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; Cooke; Crouse; Dyer; Foreman; Grant; Hickel; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Silver; Smith; Talcott and Wolfe.

Staff: Elissa Benson (786-7191).

Background: The Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Act was created to provide protection to volunteer firefighters in the event of injury or death in the performance of duty and to provide an incentive to keep them volunteering for longer periods of time. Revenues to the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Relief and Pension Fund come from fees assessed on the fire districts and cities with volunteer fire districts and from 40 percent of the fire insurance premiums tax.

The benefit provided for a firefighter who becomes temporarily disabled as a result of the performance of firefighting duties is \$1,650 per month for a period not to exceed six months. A firefighter who is permanently disabled in the performance of duty receives \$825 per month, plus \$165 per month for a spouse and \$70 per month for each child, up to a total maximum of \$1,650 per month.

The survivor of a firefighter who dies as a result of the performance of duties receives a lump sum payment of \$2,000, plus \$825 per month and \$70 per month for each child, up to a maximum of \$1,650 per month.

These benefit amounts were last increased July 1, 1989.

Summary of Bill: The benefit provided for a firefighter who becomes temporarily disabled as a result of the performance of firefighting duties is an amount equal to his or her monthly wage or \$2,550 per month, whichever is less, for a period not to exceed six months. A firefighter who is permanently disabled in the performance of duty receives \$1,275 per month, plus \$255 per month for a spouse and \$110 per month for each child, up to a total maximum of \$2,550 per month.

The survivor of a firefighter who dies as a result of the performance of duties receives a lump sum payment of \$2,000, plus \$1,275 per month and \$110 per month for each child, up to a maximum of \$2,550 per month.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 1996.

Testimony For: Volunteer firefighters are often the sole providers of firefighting services in many of the rural areas of the state. These benefits are the only benefits available to volunteer firefighters in instances of disability or death. The benefits have not been increased since 1989. Provision of these benefits is one of the limited incentives available for recruiting volunteer firefighters.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Pete Spiller, Fire Commissioners; and Joe Faubion, Board of Volunteer Fire Fighters.