



PENNSYLVANIA FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES INSTITUTE

223 State Street • Harrisburg, PA 17101 • Toll-Free: (800).FIRELINE [800.347.3546]
Phone: 717.236.5995 • Fax: 717.236.5996 • Website: www.pfesi.org

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Brian Connely, President
Mike Whitzel, Vice-President
Jeff Siegrist, Secretary
Tom Savage, Treasurer
Barry Buskey
Ray Lonabaugh
Ray Stackhouse
Janette Swade
Bill Gillespie II
Duane Hagelgans
Steve Bair

STATEWIDE ADVISORY
BOARD CHAIRMAN
Frank Zangari

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Donald H. Konkle

Testimony of the PA Fire and Emergency Service Institute and
Firemen's Association State of PA

October 15, 2018

Don Konkle

Harrisburg Fire Chief (Ret.)

Executive Director PA Fire and Emergency Service Institute (PFESI)

Legislative Chair Firemen's Association of the State of PA (FASP)

HB 2522- Workers Comp Act re: Firefighters: SUPPORT

Good morning Chairman Barrar, Chairman Sainato and committee members. I am Don Konkle thank you for the opportunity to testify.

PFESI and FASP fully support HB 2522.

As you are aware recruiting and retention of fire and EMS personnel is a critical challenge. The number of volunteer firefighters has fallen from 300,000 in 1976 to 50,000 in the 1990's, to approximately 35,000 today.

An equally important issue affecting the survival of the volunteer fire service is the rising cost, poor service, and the difficulty in having claims accepted in the current workman's compensation system.

The increasing cost of workers' compensation has forced some municipalities to reduce the financial support of their fire department. All municipalities have been impacted by the sharply rising cost of workers' compensation.



PENNSYLVANIA FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES INSTITUTE

223 State Street • Harrisburg, PA 17101 • Toll-Free: (800).FIRELINE [800.347.3546]
Phone: 717.236.5995 • Fax: 717.236.5996 • Website: www.pfesi.org

The rising costs have had an effect on municipal budgets, and the difficulty in dealing with State Workers Insurance Fund (SWIF) has been extremely frustrating to many firefighters. Claims often appear to be arbitrarily denied. If the denial is appealed, there is a demand for additional documentation; sometimes requiring more than a 100 page response from the fire company. This paper work is a difficult additional burden to place on a volunteer. The common belief in the fire service is that the paper work request is a deliberate strategy to discourage appeals.

SWIF has also taken the position that fire company members that serve only in a supporting role, such as funding or treasure, are not eligible for workers compensation. This action has caused the cancellation of fund raising activities.

We believe SWIF has a large cash surplus from the premiums collected to provide workers compensation to firefighters.

HB 2522 gives the new trust the opportunity to provide better service, a fair claims review process, reduced premiums, and to have a more cooperative firefighter safety program.

Thank You I will be happy to answer questions.