AN ACT

Amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in volunteer firefighters, further providing for definitions, for statement of purpose, for funds and for audits and providing for fire relief formula study.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. The heading of Subchapter B of Chapter 74 of Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes is amended to read:

SUBCHAPTER B

FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION

Section 2. Section 7412 of Title 35 is amended by adding definitions to read:

§ 7412. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Commissioner." The State Fire Commissioner.
"Length of service award program." A program established to provide tax-deferred income benefits to active volunteer members of a fire service.

Section 3. Section 7413 introductory paragraph and (1) of Title 35 are amended and the section is amended by adding a paragraph to read:

§ 7413. Statement of purpose.

The purpose of this subchapter is to encourage individuals to take part in the fire service as volunteer firefighters by establishing criteria and standards for orderly administration and conduct of affairs of firefighters' relief associations to ensure, as far as circumstances will reasonably permit, that funds shall be available for the assistance to and protection of volunteer firefighters and their heirs in order to provide:

(1) Financial assistance to volunteer firefighters who may suffer physical or mental injury or misfortune by reason of their participation in the fire service.

* * *

(8) Financial assistance to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters.

Section 4. Section 7416(a) and (f)(13) and (14) of Title 35 are amended and subsection (f) is amended by adding paragraphs to read:

§ 7416. Funds.

(a) General rule.--A volunteer firefighters' relief association may solicit and receive gifts and contributions from any source, including municipal corporations, but shall not have the right to receive any portion of the money distributed to
political subdivisions of this Commonwealth under Chapter 7 of the act of December 18, 1984 (P.L.1005, No.205), known as the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act, unless and until the governing body of at least one political subdivision shall have certified to the [Auditor General] commissioner that the association is a bona fide volunteer firefighters' relief association, affiliated with a fire company which affords protection against fire to all or a portion of the political subdivision.

* * *

(f) Use.--Funds of any volunteer firefighters' relief association may be spent:

* * *

(13) To maintain comprehensive health, physical fitness and physical monitoring programs that provide for physical fitness activities, nutrition education and supplies and instruction and health and fitness evaluation and monitoring, provided that the programs have been approved by the nearest State-licensed health care facility which is authorized to provide that service.

(14) To purchase exercise and fitness equipment for use by volunteer firefighters[, except that expenditures for exercise and fitness equipment shall not exceed $2,000 in any two-year period].

* * *

(18) To provide financial assistance for activities and materials needed to aid in the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

(19) To establish and pay for length of service award programs.
(20) To pay for facilities for storage of emergency vehicles, equipment, training and meetings.

(21) To pay for vehicles used for emergency response.

(22) To purchase equipment used for emergency response.

(23) To defray the cost of obtaining or renewing a commercial driver's licenses under 75 Pa.C.S. Ch. 16 (relating to commercial drivers) for volunteer firefighters who are residents of this Commonwealth to operate fire or emergency vehicles registered to fire departments or municipalities.

Section 5. Section 7418(b) of Title 35 is amended to read:

§ 7418. Audits.

* * *

(b) Findings.--If the Auditor General finds that any money received by a volunteer firefighters' relief association has been expended for a purpose other than one authorized by this subchapter, the commissioner, upon receiving notice of the findings from the Auditor General, shall [immediately notify the Governor and shall] decline to approve [further requisitions calling for] payment to the volunteer firefighters' relief association until the improperly expended amount has been reimbursed to the relief association fund.

Section 6. Title 35 is amended by adding a section to read:

§ 7419.1. Fire relief formula study.

(a) Study.--The Fire Safety Advisory Committee shall have the following duties:

(1) Review and make findings and recommendations regarding the fire relief funding formula and fire relief services in this Commonwealth.

(2) Hold public meetings regarding the fire relief
funding formula and fire relief services in different regions of this Commonwealth.

(3) Consult with and utilize experts to assist the committee in carrying out its duties under this section.

(4) Receive input from interested parties and take into consideration the diverse nature of fire services in this Commonwealth.

(5) Draft proposed legislation based on the committee's findings and recommendations regarding the fire relief funding formula and fire relief services.

(6) No later than November 30, 2020, issue a report on the committee's findings and recommendations regarding the fire relief funding formula and fire relief services to all of the following:

(i) The Governor.

(ii) The commissioner.

(iii) The President pro tempore of the Senate.

(iv) The Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the Senate.

(v) The Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee of the Senate.

(vi) The Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(vii) The Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

(viii) The Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee of the House of Representatives.

(b) Construction.--Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize a fire relief funding formula to go into effect without being approved by an act of the General Assembly.

Section 7. This act shall take effect in six months.