



The

FIRE CALL

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Some Firefighters Feel Betrayed

Some volunteer firefighters in West Virginia are not convinced that leaders in the state Legislature really have extended an "olive branch" to them. They may have a point.

Several bills introduced on behalf of the volunteers were dealt with during this year's regular session of the Legislature. Most were rejected.

Particularly near and dear to the hearts of some volunteers was a bill that would have extended some workers' compensation insurance coverage to them and, possibly, provided small pensions for some.

At one point in the House of Delegates, the measure referred to both paid and volunteer firefighters. It was approved by a vote of 96-0, with four delegates not voting.

But the bill then went to the state Senate, where a committee removed volunteer firefighters from it. When the measure went back to the House, the volunteers suddenly found support lacking. Delegates, in voting on the Senate version of the bill, had been asked to re-insert volunteer firefighters into it.

The volunteers lost that one — but narrowly. The final vote was 52-45, with three delegates not voting, in favor of accepting the Senate version.

By the end of the legislative session, some lawmakers apparently feared that they had alienated volunteer firefighters — who do, after all, vote. Both houses of the Legislature agreed to form a select committee to study problems faced by volunteer fire departments. Emphasis was to be placed on challenges the departments face in recruiting new members and retaining those they have. The workers' compensation stipulation had been intended to address that concern.

Five state senators and eight delegates have been appointed to the committee. It is the selection of delegates named to the panel that has some volunteer firefighters upset. They are House Majority Whip Mike Caputo, D-Marion, who is

co-chairman of the panel; Mike Burdiss, D-Wyoming; Daniel Poling, D-Wood; Bill Proudfoot, D-Randolph; Ruth Rowan, R-Hampshire; Robert Schadler, R-Mineral; Sharon Spencer, D-Kanawha; and Kenneth Tucker, D-Marshall. Two of them, Tucker and Burdiss, lost bids for re-election during the Tuesday primary.

All of the eight are viewed, in a way, as deserters from the volunteers' cause, I've been told. Why? Because when the Senate-amended bill came up for a vote in the House, all eight voted to accept the Senate revision — stripping volunteer firefighters from the bill. Had the eight voted against the revision, it would have been defeated. At that point, the House and Senate would have had to reconcile their versions of the bill — possibly by re-inserting coverage for volunteer firefighters.

Now, I understand the volunteers' concern. I have enormous respect for men and women who are active in volunteer fire departments. They provide most of the fire coverage in our state, and frequently risk their lives simply to help their neighbors.

But I also am aware of the twists and turns taken by any bill introduced in the Legislature. More than a few pieces of legislation that clearly were good have been killed — and sometimes, even their proponents give up on them, realizing that they simply can't get the job done. Better to retreat this year, then try again next year, some believe.

Still, the 52 members of the House who voted to accept that Senate version of the bill in question haven't won any new friends among volunteer firefighters. Some of them wonder why the select committee's House members all are people who, in their minds, voted against them. There were, after all, 45 delegates who tried to do what the volunteers wanted. Why weren't any of them included on the committee?

That may make the committee's work more difficult. Still, they ought to stick with it. **Volunteer fire departments need — and have earned — some help from the state.**

By MIKE MYER

THE SUPPLY LINE

By: **Doug Mongold** WVSFA President

Dear Fellow Firefighters:

I am contacting you to inform you about the last legislative session; it was a very bad year for the Volunteer Fire Service. I am asking each and every one of you to please become involved and join our association. We need your support and help. When we have a bill we want to pass or kill; we need for firemen around the state to get in contact with their legislators. We have a web site that can be used to do this; it is <http://www.wvsfa.com/>.

During the last legislative session the first problem we had was SB-667 Relating to Policemen's and Firemen's Pension and Relief Funds. The \$2.65 million for FY08 and FY09 represent a redirection of funds from the Teachers Retirement System to the Municipal Policemen's and Firemen's Pension and Relief Funds. This change will put back in place the distribution that occurred prior to 1990 for these revenues, and the \$12.68 million dollars that will be generated from the .45% of one percent premium surcharge (33-3-33) will be invested by the Investment Management Board for five years and then will be distributed (one fifth of the total fund) to municipal policemen's and firemen's pensions and relief funds with the interest earned therein from 5 years worth of collections and interest. The \$12.68 million figure does not include any interest earned therein for the 5 years the bill would require the funds to be invested with the IMB prior to distribution. It would generate \$15.33 million into their pension plan with us getting nothing. We were able to stop this bill in House Finance; there wasn't a vote against it in the Senate.

The second problem we had was SB-571 Relating to Certain Firefighter's Workers' Compensation Benefits. This bill passed and was signed by the Governor. This bill creates a rebuttal presumption that cardiovascular injury, disease, pulmonary disease or death of a professional firefighter is an occupational injury and nothing is in this bill for volunteers. The Insurance Commissioner shall study the effects of the rebuttal presumptions created in this subsection on the premiums charged for workers' compensation for professional municipal firefighters; the probable effects of extending these presumptions to volunteer firefighters; and the overall impact of the risk management programs, wage replacements, premium calculations, number of hours worked per volunteer, treatment of non active or "social" members of a volunteer crew, and the feasibility of combining various volunteer departments under a single policy on the availability and cost of providing workers' compensation coverage to volunteer firefighters. The Insurance Commissioner shall file the report with the Joint

Committee on Government and Finance no later than the first day of December, two thousand eight. This could cost us some benefits and could raise our premiums. SB-571 passed the Senate with all voting for it. It was amended in the House to include volunteers and it passed the House without a vote against it. It was put into a conference committee; the conference committee took the volunteers out and created the study. The vote on the conference committee report is attached; the yeas vote adopted the report and took us out and the nays would have sent the bill back to the Senate with us in it and they would have had to accept it or reject it. If they rejected it the bill would have died. Those that voted Nay are true friends because they didn't want this bill to pass without including the volunteers. We did have some successes. HCR-17 Requesting the Joint Committee on Government and Finance to study the recruitment, retention and value of volunteer firefighters in the State of West Virginia. It was approved and the study will start next month. SB-224 Creating Joint Emergency Services Act of 2008 was introduced by the Governor which would have allowed County Commissioners to combine Fire and EMS Boards. Jefferson County was the only one in the state that wanted this; we were able to make a local bill out of this so it only applied to Jefferson County. The bill passed just applying to Jefferson County. Again I ask for your membership and help; we need to all stand together for the Volunteer Fire Service. I am asking everyone that belongs to this association to help us get every Volunteer Fire Department in the state involved in this association; I would also like to see every department in the state send representatives to the convention this year that is going to be held in Charleston, WV August 21st, 22nd, & 23rd. You can visit our web page listed above to get complete information. During the convention we as a group can decide what we may want to get accomplished during the next legislative session. It also gives everyone the opportunity to ask questions and get answers from the association officer's, fire commission members, and the Fire Marshall's Office.

Remember united we stand and divide we fall, so let's stand up and be counted...

Sincerely yours,
Doug M. Mongold
 President
 WVSFA

West Virginia Firefighters, Police Save Family from Blaze

WEIRTON, W.Va. --

Members of Weirton's two public safety agencies teamed up to help a family escape from the upper floors of their burning home Thursday morning.

A fire started in the living room of a home on the 300 block of Heaslett Avenue.

The fire started in a Christmas tree, a fire department lieutenant said.

Three girls were trapped in the upper floors of the house. One girl, approximately high school aged, jumped from an upper window to safety.

Two younger girls had to be rescued.

One was plucked from the second story by a firefighter, but the second was rescued by a Weirton city police offi-

cer who used what a fire department lieutenant described as a "civilian ladder."

The lieutenant said that police officer deserved special commendation for his actions in helping rescue the trapped girl.

The girls' father was able to escape on his own.

No serious injuries were reported, but some of the home's occupants were treated for smoke inhalation.

Two family pets were also rescued.

Damage to the home was minimal, firefighters said.

West Virginia Firefighter Falls Through Floor of Burning Home

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Charleston firefighters were reminded of how dangerous their job can be Wednesday morning, when a first responder fell through the floor of a burning house.

Capt. R. Parsons entered through the front door of the house at 1518 Loudon Heights Road when the floor gave out and he fell about five feet into a crawl space, said Capt. Carl Beaver. There was no fire where he fell, and firefighters were able to get him out uninjured.

"He's lucky he didn't get hurt - really, really lucky," Beaver said. Flames were visible in the back of the house when firefighters arrived on scene just before 5 a.m., Beaver and Metro 911 dispatchers said.

They were unable to keep the flames from damaging much of the inside of the house, which was empty and for sale, he said. Several hours after the fire was extinguished, investigators still had no idea what started the blaze. "We know where it started, but how it started, we're scratching out heads at this point," Beaver said. "We don't have a clue at this point."

The house's owner, Bill Flynt, said he inherited the house from his mother, who passed away two years ago. Flynt's parents built the house in 1965.

"I got a call at 4:45 a.m. A neighbor called and said the house was on fire," said Flynt, who lives with his wife in Charleston's East End. "I'm glad we weren't here."

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Moorefield Volunteer Fire Co. - 46

Fall Bash 2007~~August 30, 2008

Approximately \$300,000.00 in prizes!

(Subject to sale of 7500 tickets)

Tickets \$50.00 each~ONLY 10,000 tickets sold

Location: Route 220 North of Moorefield, WV (turn left at the bridge)
Gates open Friday, August 29, 2008 for camping (first come first serve camping)
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To order tickets make check payable to Moorefield Vol. Fire Co. 46 ~
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OR order online using PAYPAL at www.moorefieldfire.com

The 12:00, 3:00 and 5:00 winners will have a choice of a Ford F150 Ext. Cab, Chevrolet 1500 Ext. Cab, Dodge 1500 Ext. Cab., Ford Mustang or you may choose \$25000.00 cash!

For additional information, please call:

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******* Early Bird Special *******

Purchase your Bash Tickets before June-1-2008 to be in the Early Bird special drawings of \$5000.00 and \$2500.00 to be drawn @ 11:30 AM on the day of the Bash.

Winners need not be present to win!!!!!!

Fire Call

45 10th St
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