

Legislative Update – Week of January 27, 2019

To follow the **Montana Fire Alliance's** watch list go to www.mtfirealliance.org.

The past week in review (week of January 27, 2019):

SB29 (Require workers' comp for all volunteer firefighters) Passed out of Senate Local Government Committee 8-2 and is scheduled for a vote on the Senate Floor on Monday, January 28th. The bill would require that all volunteer firefighters be covered by work comp and was developed by the 2018 Local Government Interim Committee with input by Montana fire service organizations. It has a delayed implementation date of October 1, 2022 in order to give volunteer fire departments time to prepare for and ultimately fulfill the mandate. The bill is supported by the Montana Fire Alliance.

SB17 (Authorize creation of regional fire protection service authorities) Had a hearing before the Senate Local Government Committee on Monday, January 21st. The bill would allow Municipal (regardless of class) fire departments, rural fire districts, rural fire protection (volunteer and paid departments), fire companies, and fire service areas to merge with any other adjacent fire jurisdiction to establish a regional fire authority. The Montana Fire Alliance supported the bill. It passed out of Committee, just days later, unanimously.

SB20 (Allow certain municipalities to annex into a rural fire district) Had a hearing before the Senate Local Government Committee on Monday, January 21st. The bill would allow second class cities to annex into a rural fire district for fire protection services. It was developed by the 2018 Local Government Interim Committee with lots of input from the Montana fire service. It was supported by the Montana Fire Alliance. The bill was passed by the Committee 10-0.

Hearings and issues this upcoming week:

SB160 (Provide workers' compensation for presumptive diseases of firefighters) Has a hearing before the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee on Tuesday, January 29th, at 8:30 AM in room 422. The bill, known as "The Firefighter Protection Act", would create a presumption under workers' compensation for certain diseases associated with firefighting activities. It would automatically cover firefighters who are required to have work comp coverage under state statute. It would be optional for volunteer firefighters, who are not required to be covered by work comp, subject to the insurer agreeing to provide presumptive coverage. The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

SB164 (Generally revise school safety laws) Has a hearing in front of the Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee on Monday, January 28th, at 3:00 PM in room 303. The bill would create an exception to the State Fire Code that would allow schools to lock fire exits, or entrances to fire exits, in the event of a threat to student safety. The Montana Fire Alliance opposes the bill.

SB171 (Generally revise laws related to firefighters) Has a hearing scheduled before the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee on Tuesday, January 29th, at 8:30 AM in

room 422. The bill would require that all paid firefighters hired after January 1, 2020 be tobacco-free. In addition, it says that "A paid or volunteer firefighter may not use tobacco products while engaged in firefighting work, on firefighting equipment, while attending any firefighting training, or on any worksite while engaging in firefighting duties". The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

HB258 (Revise laws for passing emergency vehicles) Has a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, January 29th, at 8:00 AM in room 137. The bill substantially strengthens Montana's "Move Over" law and is carried by Representative Jim Hamilton, a volunteer firefighter with the Fort Ellis Fire Department. The Montana Fire Alliance supports the bill.

Respectfully Submitted by
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Montana Fire Alliance - Legislative Liaison