

MT Legislative Update

The past week in review, week of February 11, 2019

SB160 Provide workers' compensation for presumptive diseases of firefighters) Had a hearing before the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee on Tuesday, January 29th. 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 bill, after amendments, passed out of committee on a 9-1 vote and is scheduled for a vote on the Senate floor on Monday, February 11th. The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

HB258 (Revise laws for passing emergency vehicles) Had a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, January 29th. The bill substantially strengthened Montana's "Move Over" law and was carried by Representative Jim Hamilton, a volunteer firefighter with the Fort Ellis Fire Department. The bill was tabled in committee and is now probably dead. The Montana Fire Alliance supported the bill.

HB296 (Revise laws related to permissible fireworks) Had a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, February 5th. The bill would allow the use of sky rockets, roman candles and bottle rockets which are currently prohibited in Montana. The bill was passed, in executive action, and will be headed to the House floor for a vote. The Montana Fire Alliance is opposed to the bill.

SB171 (Generally revise laws related to firefighters) Had a hearing before the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee on Tuesday, January 29th. 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 bill passed out of committee and is scheduled for a Senate floor vote on Monday, February 11th. The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

Hearings and issues this upcoming week:

HB329 Provide funding for local emergency services) Has a hearing in the House Local Government Committee on Tuesday, February 12th, at 3:00 PM in room 472. The bill would provide \$250,000 annually to each county for emergency services. Funding would come from the State's "bed tax". The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

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

Respectfully Submitted
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Montana Fire Alliance - Legislative Liaison