

The past week in review (week of February 4, 2019):

SB29 (Require workers' comp for all volunteer firefighters) Passed the Senate and is headed to the House for additional hearings. 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.

SB20 (Allow certain municipalities to annex into a rural fire district) Passed in the Senate and has been transmitted to the House. 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.

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. It was supported by the Montana Fire Chief's and the Montana State Fireman's Association. Work Comp providers, with the exception of State Fund, stood in opposition. The Montana Fire Alliance is watching the bill.

SB164 (Generally revise school safety laws) Had a hearing in front of the Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee on Monday, January 28th. 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. Several Fire Marshals opposed the bill. The Montana Fire Alliance opposes the bill.

HB258 (Revise laws for passing emergency vehicles) Had a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, January 29th. 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 bill had support from tow truck drivers, the MHP and the Fire Service. The Montana Fire Alliance supported the bill.

Hearings and issues this upcoming week:

HB296 (Revise laws related to permissible fireworks) Has a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, February 5th, at 8:00 AM in room 137. The bill would allow the use of sky rockets, roman candles and bottle rockets which are currently prohibited in Montana. The Montana Fire Alliance is opposed to the bill.

Respectfully Submitted by
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