MT Legislative Update (February 17, 2019)

The past week in review:

SB160 (Provide workers' compensation for presumptive diseases of firefighters) Passed third reading in the Senate and has been transmitted to the House. 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.

HB296 (Revise laws related to permissible fireworks) Passed third reading in the House and has been transmitted to the Senate. 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.

SB171 (Generally revise laws related to firefighters) Passed third reading in the Senate and is now waiting for a hearing on the House side. 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.

HB329 (Provide funding for local emergency services) Had a hearing in the House Local Government Committee on Tuesday, February 12th. 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.

SB20 (Allow certain municipalities to annex into a rural fire district) Had a hearing in the House Local Government Committee on Thursday, February 14th. 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.

Hearings and issues this upcoming week:

There are several fire bills of importance that are awaiting hearing dates, however at this time we do not have information as to when those dates will be set. It is possible that we could see hearings on those bills this upcoming week.

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