

Montana Legislative Update – Week of April 14, 2019

HB385 (Authorize blackjack to be played in licensed establishments) Was tabled in the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee on Tuesday, April 9th, and is probably dead. As originally presented in House Taxation, the bill had nothing to do with fire or emergency services. However, an amendment was presented that would use a portion of the 5% tax on live blackjack tables to fund \$250,000 per year for assistance to volunteer firefighters to help with workers compensation premiums. The Montana Fire Alliance supported the bill.

SB171 (Generally revise laws related to firefighters) Passed 3rd and final reading on Monday, April 8th, and will soon be sent to the Governor for a signature. The bill will 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 was watching the bill.

SB160 (Provide workers' compensation for presumptive diseases of firefighters) Passed 3rd reading in the House 89-8 on Monday, April 8th, and is headed to the Governor's desk. The bill will 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 was watching the bill.

SB38 (Allow emergency care providers to offer community health care) Passed concurrence readings in the Senate last week and has been sent to the Governor's Office. It would allow emergency care providers to be involved in community-integrated health care services under the regulation of the Board of Medical Examiners. The Montana Fire Alliance supported the bill.

Hearings and issues this upcoming week:

SB29 (Require workers' comp for all volunteer firefighters). Scheduled for a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, April 17th, at 8:00 AM in room 137. 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. ***We could use a few folks to help with supportive testimony on Wednesday morning!***

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

Respectfully Submitted

Leonard Lundby

Montana Fire Alliance - Legislative Liaison