

## Tennessee Fire Service Coalition 2020 Legislative Overview

The 111<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adjourned on June 19, 2020 after passing an amended state budget drafted in response to steep funding deficits caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Upon return from the spring legislative recess, House and Senate leadership agreed to address an abbreviated agenda of bills pertaining solely to state budgetary measures, COVID-19 relief efforts, and time sensitive matters. As the committee and floor agendas remained limited in scope, many legislative initiatives introduced in the beginning of the year were postponed or removed from consideration. Governor Lee recently announced his intention to call a special session of the General Assembly in August to address limited liability protections from COVID-19 related legal claims and regulatory relief for telehealth services. A specific date for special session has not been confirmed.

Attached please find a comprehensive bill report outlining all legislation tracked by the Tennessee Fire Service Coalition during the 2019-2020 legislative session. Key legislative issues of interest to the Coalition are addressed below.

- **Volunteer Firefighter Training Incentives (SB1639/HB2385):** This bill aimed to expand eligibility for volunteer firefighter training pay supplements.
  - This legislation was deferred in the Senate State and Local Government Committee due to the limited agenda criteria implemented during the June legislative session.
  - Under present law, the commission on firefighting personnel standards and education gives a pay supplement of \$800 to any unit of government with paid firefighters who each year successfully complete an in-service training course, appropriate to the firefighter's rank and responsibility and the size and location of the firefighter's department, of at least 40-hours duration at a school certified or established by the commission. The unit of government then pays the firefighter the \$800 pay supplement in addition to any regular pay.
  - This legislation *extends eligibility for the \$800 pay supplement, upon completion of the above requirements, to any unpaid volunteer firefighter* of a fire department that is registered and recognized by the state fire marshal.
  
- **Firefighter Cancer Presumption (SB2863/HB1819):** This bill amended the “Barry Brady Act” to specify that a firefighter must obtain a physical medical examination after July 1, 2019, and the examination must include a cancer screening that fails to reveal any evidence of the cancers listed in the Act.
  - This legislation passed the Senate floor on a 31-0 vote and the House floor on a 71-1 vote and was signed by Governor Lee on June 22, 2020.
  - This legislation was enacted as [Public Chapter 754](#) on July 2, 2020.
  - NOTE: Due to COVID-19, in Governor Lee’s [Executive Order No. 28](#) the Governor addresses the July 1, 2020 deadline for obtaining the necessary medical screening in order to take advantage of the presumption passed by the General Assembly. In Paragraph 29.1 **the date has been moved to October 1, 2020.**
  
- **Lee Administration Policy on COVID-19 Data Sharing:** During the height of the pandemic, Governor Lee directed the Tennessee Department of Health to begin sharing a list of residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 with law enforcement and other

first responders, including firefighters, citing viral contraction concerns on behalf of front line employees responding to emergency incidents.

- After several legislators from both parties expressed concern regarding the policy's infringement on individual data privacy, Governor Lee instructed the department to stop releasing a list of names and addresses of Tennessee residents who have contracted COVID-19 to first responders on May 31, 2020.
  - The Fire Service Coalition sent multiple letters to Governor Lee to urge him to continue data sharing methods.
- **Kidde Smoke Alarm legislation (2021):** We have been approached by Kidde for input on legislation they plan to pursue in the 2021 General Assembly session. I have attached a rough draft of the proposed legislation. In summary it amends Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 68-102-151(b) by adding the following as new subdivisions:
    - (3) Own or operate a one-family or two-family rental unit without installing an approved carbon monoxide alarm in each living unit;
    - (A) This subdivision does not apply to one-family or two-family rental units that do not contain fuel-burning appliances or attached garage.
    - 4) Tamper with or remove any carbon monoxide alarm required by this section, or a component of any carbon monoxide alarm;
    - It also includes tenant responsibility language. Their purpose in including this language is because Tennessee already requires CO alarms in multifamily housing serviced by fuel-burning appliances or with attached garages, so this would only apply to one/two-family home rentals.
    - **PLEASE let me know your thoughts on this legislation and our proposed position.**
    - **NOTE: In the past we have written a letter of support for Kidde smoke alarm legislation, but that was the extent of our support and lobbying. And, the legislation (SB1125/HB1127) was taken off notice due to the shortened legislative session this year.**