



UPFFA

Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut

#4

The **HOT** Sheet

News and information from Connecticut's
Professional Fire Fighters

HB 5629 JF'ed out of Labor with Substitute Language

Responding to the concerns expressed by some legislators, the Labor and Public Employees Committee voted 8-0 with 3 absent to JF-S HB 5629 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR FIREFIGHTERS AND POLICE OFFICERS to the floor with substitute language.

The new language strikes SECTION 3 of the bill, removing cancer protection from the text of the legislation. In addition, coverage for hypertension is also removed from SECTION 2, leaving coverage for heart emergencies intact.

The new bill is attached and is LCO 3335.

The bill makes other technical corrections as well as further defines police officer to include Constables who have completed Police Officer Standards and Training Council certification.

SECTION 1 of this bill addresses the need to help Fire Fighters and Police Officers cope with the horrific aftermath of an exposure to and contraction of a Communicable Disease. Present privacy laws make it extremely difficult if not impossible for a fire fighter or police officer to adequately record an incident of exposure. The medical condition of ALL patients treated by fire fighters and police is PROTECTED INFORMATION, making it difficult to document necessary Worker's Compensation information thus compromising future claims.

The emotional trauma to worker's and their families of being exposed to a highly contagious disease has had devastating effects on some families. Most claims are routinely denied, forcing workers to fight to protect themselves and their families. Requiring them to bear the burden of litigation without the benefit of presumption on their side only adds to the family trauma and is unjust. **REBUTTABLE** presumption is the most equitable solution.

This bill seeks to establish a **REBUTTABLE** presumption that firefighters, police officers, emergency rescue, and other public safety personnel who contract hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis, or tuberculosis did so in the course of their employment provided certain criteria are met. Should municipalities feel a claim is not justified, they have the right to challenge that claim

with evidence that the exposure occurred out of work.

SECTION 2 of this bill attempts to correct the inequities created by the 1996 changes in Workers' Compensation.

The changes created two classifications of public safety officers; uniformed municipal fire fighters and police officers and nearly ALL OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS in the State of Connecticut. If a *Volunteer Fire Fighter, State Police Officer, Corrections Officer, Capitol Police Officer, Division of Criminal Justice Detective, DOT Aeronautic Operator, Motor Vehicle Inspector, University Security Officer and State employee performing hazardous duties* were to suffer a heart attack on duty, they are presumed to have contracted such heart ailment in the course of their employment. **THIS IS NOT THE CASE** for municipal fire fighters and police officers. If a fire fighter or police officer suffers a heart attack while on duty, it is his/her responsibility to prove that this condition occurred as a result of their employment. This places the municipal fire fighter and police officer in a fundamentally more difficult position than any other public safety officer in Connecticut.

This bill **IS NOT A RETURN TO PRE-1996 COVERAGE** but limits municipal fire fighters and police officers to the same coverage as most if not all other hazardous duty officers, that is, ON DUTY incidents.