

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 95-243

AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR MUNICIPAL VOLUNTEERS

<b>Act Number:</b>	243	<b>Year:</b>	1995
<b>Bill Number:</b>	SB 269	<b>Pages</b>	
<b>Senate Pages:</b>	2747-2773		27
<b>House Pages:</b>	6361-6381		21
<b>Committee:</b>	Labor 694-695, 719, 722, 723-724		9
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Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives Proceedings

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CONNECTICUT  
GEN. ASSEMBLY  
SENATE

PROCEEDINGS  
1995

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PART 8

2543-2919

Simply ask for a voice vote, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

All those in favor signify by saying "aye".

ASSEMBLY:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? So carried. Senator Upson.

SEN. UPSON:

Thank you. And on the bill itself, Madam President, as was explained earlier, it allows for a jury trial and a CUTPA violations statute, that's Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act.

If no, objection to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Hearing no objection, so ordered. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Page 24, Calendar 112, Substitute for SB269, An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage for Municipal Volunteers. Committee Report on Labor and Appropriations, File 164.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Guglielmo.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

Yes, Madam President. Thank you. I move adoption of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage

of the bill and I would like to just give the brief premise of the bill, if I may.

THE CHAIR:

Proceed.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

Thank you, Madam President. And then I know we do have an amendment, I just wanted to set the stage a little bit.

The bill basically, as it is now, there are no state firefighters who fight forest fires any longer. There was a contingent that did that, but that's long gone and the municipalities in the area of the state forest are required to fight the fires in the forest.

The problem is, if they're injured fighting those fires presently, they come under the workers' comp policy of the municipality. We're just trying to shift the responsibility here to the state where we feel it belongs.

Thank you, Madam President, and if we could call that amendment, I'd yield to Senator Fleming.

THE CLERK:

Which LCO?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, Madam President. The Clerk has LCO6641.  
Could he please call and I be permitted to summarize.

THE CLERK:

Senate Amendment Schedule "A", LCO6641, introduced  
by Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Proceed.

SEN. FLEMING:

Madam President, what this LCO will do to the file copy is, it will, because the file copy provides for higher benefit level under workers' comp to a volunteer firefighter, it will provide that that higher benefit level will apply if the volunteer firefighter is unable to perform his regular employment duties.

The amendment will also provide that the municipality will not have any increased liability due to the fact that the state would be assuming the workers' compensation benefit for the volunteer firefighter.

The amendment also makes a minor change in the word firefighters, those are the individuals who come out to your house when your house is on fire, they're not called firemen any more, so it makes that change to firefighter.

Then the bill also provides, what the amendment also provides a benefit or a privilege to state employees which many private sector employees enjoy right now who are either firefighters or volunteer ambulance personnel, and that is, if training is offered during the time that the employee is at work, that the employee may leave work with the permission of the appointing authority and would not lose regular pay or loss of overtime or sick leave.

And as I said, Madam President, I did move adoption. I think it is a good amendment. It will go a far way, I think, to help retain firefighters in the State of Connecticut and certainly treat them fairly as I feel they ought to be treated.

THE CHAIR:

Yes, Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Madam President. I thought we did a bill similar to this last year. On the last part of the amendment, through you, Madam President, the last

part of the amendment, Senator, didn't we pass that part last year on a bill?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, through you. Yes, the Senator is correct. The Senate in fact, did pass that provision. Unfortunately, it did not pass the House.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Madam President. And through you, Madam President. On this, just so I got this amendment straight, I was real concerned reading the OFL report, I mean the OLR report and, what would have happened if the state took the responsibility of the workers' compensation for the volunteer firemen.

Under, normally, if this amendment wasn't done, then the municipalities would now be off the hook for workers' compensation but they'd be on the hook for liability. They could have been sued as a third party if this amendment wasn't done, is that correct? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, Madam President. Through you, in Section 3 of the amendment, it provides that because the state is now assuming the workers' compensation benefits for the volunteer firefighter, that then the municipality would not be subject to suit because the firefighter would have the benefit of the workers' compensation through the state while they're on the state property.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you, then the state now is assuming the responsibility of workers' compensation and the municipality is not, but the municipality is also becoming a third party immunity. Correct? They are immune now to a lawsuit for negligence.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, Madam President. The bill provides that the state would assume the liability. What the amendment does, is it relieves the municipality, then, of the liability of being sued because the worker now has the

benefit of workers' comp through the state.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Madam President. Just one more question. This is now a cost shift from the municipality to the state now for workers' compensation. It's a shift of costs. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, Madam President. Through you. That's what the underlying bill does. It does shift that cost when the firefighter is on state property fighting a state forest fire, or in the event they're on a state highway. That's correct, Madam President, through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Senator. And thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Sullivan.

SEN. SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Madam President. First, since we are on the amendment, Subsection c of Section 4, the new language, it would appear on the face of it, to authorize outside of collective bargaining, the unilateral grant by legislation, payment, overtime and sick leave for employees who leave their jobs with authorization to perform volunteer services.

Through you to Senator Fleming, two questions. The first is, is this not typically, and are there not in fact, provisions in current contracts and past contracts that would address this in the State of Connecticut?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. If there are, I am not aware of them. It is possible that there could be, but I'm not aware that there are any provisions that would provide for this.

Through you, Madam President, I am aware at least in several state agencies where state employees have contacted me, that in fact they do not have this privilege, and that was my reason for actually, over the last ten years trying to pass this provision. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Sullivan.

SEN. SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Madam President. If there are not such provisions now, essentially outside of collective bargaining and with no obligation to bargain for this, this legislation unilaterally grants employees this benefit.

The second question goes to the unforeseen impact, potentially, of this, given what I believe Senator Fleming is attempting to accomplish. Line 42 in the amendment requires the authorization of the appointing authority.

Given that, and given that the consequences for the agency are to pay compensation, overtime and sick leave, even in the absence of the employee, is this not in fact a disincentive to allowing the individual to go and if you wish to withhold the authorization, you essentially save that employee's time and you do not have to pay them for the time they're not on the job?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. Madam President, what I think this provision will do is precisely what

happens in the private sector right now. Depending upon the appointing authority and the policies set by the appointing authority and whether or not the individual is released, I think ultimately it will allow volunteer firefighters to attend training sessions that they ordinarily would not be able to provide without loss of pay and really without any penalty.

Oftentimes, through you, Madam President, what happens is that we all have slow days and if the appointing authority decides that in fact it is a slow day, and that this training is only offered on that particular day, the employee would then be allowed to leave.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Sullivan.

SEN. SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Madam President. I can't quite read between the lines. I don't notice the reference to slow days. It would appear that the best way for the authority simply to assure no loss of the employee's time for which they would be paying, is simply to deny the opportunity. The power rests with the agency to say, not authorized and therefore we will continue to have you on the job and we won't have to pay you for

the time you've taken away.

The concern being, though I think the precedent of unilaterally doing this by legislation is a troubling one. The concern even as to the amendment and what Senator Fleming, I think intends to accomplish is, it sends a message to the agency that your best recourse here is simply to never, ever, authorize the time off because that's your control in terms of never having to pay people for not being on the job.

THE CHAIR:

Senator DiBella.

SEN. DIBELLA:

Thank you, Madam President. Through you to Senator Fleming. In Section 4, Subsection b, I notice that there is a period of time that is put on volunteers of the American Red Cross of 14 days.

In Subsection c of Section 4, there is no restriction if you're a volunteer ambulance service or member of a volunteer firefighter or a member of a volunteer ambulance service.

Would the proponent please enlighten me as to why there wasn't a restricted period of time in Subsection c as it applies in Subsection b.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you, Madam President, through you. Speaking from personal experience, Madam President, there are not that many opportunities for these types of courses to be offered to state employees. It would be my understanding, I'm not quite sure, since it's existing language in Section b as to why in the case of the American Red Cross there is that 14 day provision, but in terms of the training program that would be offered to volunteer firefighters, it probably will be a rare instance where this training would be offered during the course of a normal work week where they would need to request this.

Madam President, through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator DiBella.

SEN. DIBELLA:

Thank you, Madam President. That really doesn't answer the question. I think in the preparation of the legislation, the amendment, there should have been adequate research to enlighten the Body as to why in existing legislation Section 4, Subsection b, that you have the qualification and in the c, the open amendment, it doesn't exist.

I concur with Senator Sullivan. I think this is

first, a dangerous precedent to be unilateral on extending benefits to state employees that exist in the same bargaining unit and in the same job classifications or classifications in a specific department.

I don't think it's good for morale within an organization. I think any of us that have had the opportunity to manage or be part of organized units of, or I should say, part of a management group, knows that when one group of people have a benefit that others do not and it has been given unilaterally, in this case through legislation, that it does create problems of morale within the organization that is trying to provide a service. In this case, it's the State of Connecticut. It could be any division of the state.

I think this is a mistake. It's a dangerous precedent and consequently, I could not support this part of the amendment. Not just the fact that it doesn't quality as it does in Subsection c, or Subsection b, but also just a dangerous precedent that's being started here.

Obviously, we all like to do things for certain people, but when we find in the normal course of collective bargaining that we find our state employees being discussed in many different lights, I think that

giving these little goodies to people is a very dangerous precedent for we, as the Legislature, in terms of trying to create a balanced and equal playing field for our employees, especially in the process of collective bargaining.

I would ask for a roll call vote.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Madam President. Just one more thing. Now that we have shifted the cost from the municipalities onto the state, to mandate the state as to speak, to pay for these that municipalities now are allowed to do, actually encouraged to do. Has anyone done a fiscal report on what it would cost, now that the municipalities have no incentive not to do it because the state's going to now pay for this.

Do we have a fiscal note that would describe what it would cost us if all the municipalities decided, well, this is the thing to do because the state's paying for it now. Through you, Madam President, to Senator Fleming.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. The fiscal note on it indicates that there would be minimal cost that could be absorbed within the agency budget.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Sullivan.

SEN. SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Madam President. For the second time on the amendment. Since the amendment touches on, as Senator Colapietro has indicated, the underlying bill, we might as well continue that comment and question.

Now, I think the point is perfectly well taken, that what the principle function of this bill is, no matter what we've heard about the terrible need to cut back on the state's worker compensation costs for our state employees in places like the Mental Retardation Department and how terrible it is that we're spending so much money as a state government on workers' compensation.

The principle function of the bill is to shift to the State of Connecticut increased workers' compensation costs. It doesn't get any simpler than

that. That's what it does. It's what it does on its face.

What it also appears to do is not simply shift those costs, but if you read carefully, although it is a somewhat tortuous fiscal note, if you read that fiscal note, the net cost of that shift having been assumed by the state is higher than it would have been in almost all instances to the municipalities, had they borne it through their workers' compensation coverage.

The fact of the matter, the conclusion seems to be that if the result is approximately 11% increase, 11% increase in total workers' compensation cost.

I understand the important work that volunteer firefighters and other volunteers do. There's no question about that. The question here is, whether there's going to be some sort of consistency and whether we are going to stand up and rail about state employee workers' compensation costs and rail about the cost of workers' compensation generally to the State of Connecticut and then slide through a little bill that in fact does a great deal to increase those costs.

I just think it's the wrong thing to do for the right purposes, but the wrong thing.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. First of all, Madam President, I don't see this as sliding it through. This issue has been before a number of committees, including the Appropriations Committee which has signed off on the bill itself.

The Office of Fiscal Analysis has reviewed the fiscal note and has indicated that the amendment would not add any additional cost, or it would be minimal cost to the state.

Also, Madam President, in terms of support in the municipalities, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities has signed off on this as well. The cost to the State of Connecticut to its municipalities and to our taxpayers would be extraordinary if volunteer firefighters in fact stop volunteering.

And one of the concerns that the municipal officials have, and that's one of the reasons for the underlying bill, is because if the volunteers stop volunteering, they'll have to hire a full-time paid fire department, which in many cases, for many of our small towns, by small towns I would mean just about probably 150 of the 169 towns in Connecticut, it would be a terrible, terrible waste of resources to have a full-time paid fire department.

This is an effort to afford that cost occurring to the taxpayers of Connecticut. The amendment is supported by CCM. The State Firemen's Association supports it. If Senators are concerned about this, they might want to check with that organization. Is it an extremely large organization in the state. They've been quite vocal on this issue, so I can understand if you come from a municipality right now that pays their fire department where this might not make too much of a difference to you.

It most certainly will make a difference to your mayors in the towns that do not have paid fire departments, and I would urge the members to support the amendment as well as to support the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you comment further? There's been a request for a roll call vote. Would you please make the announcement, Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

THE CHAIR:

The machine is now open. Has everyone voted? The machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, would you give me the tally, please.

THE CLERK:

Total number voting, 35; necessary for passage, 18. Those voting "yea", 27; those voting "nay", 8.

THE CHAIR:

The amendment passes. Senator Guglielmo.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

Thank you, Madam President. Since I summarized the bill earlier, I don't think there's any need to do that again. If anybody has any questions, I'd be glad to try to answer them, and I would move passage of the bill as amended.

THE CHAIR:

Will you comment further? Senator Daily.

SEN. DAILY:

Thank you, Madam President. I would like to ask again about the fiscal note and since that's been touched on, my question about the fiscal note is, is this in the Governor's budget, or is this in anything the Appropriations Committee has passed already?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Guglielmo.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

I'll yield to Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you, Madam President. Madam President, this bill has been to the Appropriations Committee already.

SEN. DAILY:

I don't think that was my question. Perhaps I wasn't clear. The bill has been to the Appropriations Committee and improved as a bill. Is this in action the Appropriations Committee has taken on the budget?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. DAILY:

Is this in the budget?

SEN. FLEMING:

I can't answer that question, Madam President, through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Daily.

SEN. DAILY:

Thank you, Madam President. Would that mean then that if it is not in the budget, even though we enact this, then it does not happen?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

No, Madam President, through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Daily.

SEN. DAILY:

If we are to pass this today and there is no money in the budget for it to happen, then how does it happen?

THE CHAIR:

Senator DiBella.

SEN. DIBELLA:

Thank you, Madam President. I would assume that whatever budget we adopt, that the fiscal note anticipates that this would be accommodated within those agency budgets, thereby being that whatever budget eventually passes this Body, that this would be a part of that because the budget from the fiscal note says that there actually, there's no, there is a fiscal note but it can be absorbed within agency budgets.

So apparently, they're anticipating a small enough participation, at least in this budget, that it would be accommodated within the fiscal constraints of whatever budget we adopt. I would assume.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Daily.

SEN. DAILY:

Thank you, Madam President. I thought my reading was potential significant cost. And so then we would be assigning a potential significant cost to each and every state agency when the agency budget itself did not build that in.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Guglielmo.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

Is it me?

THE CHAIR:

She was looking at you, so I assumed she wanted --

SEN. DIBELLA:

I guess I over, I was addressing myself and I apologize. I was addressing myself to the fiscal note that applied to the amendment. I can't make that representation on the underlying bill which we are now debating. That fiscal, that response, ad I apologize, was to the amendment as the fiscal note related on 5/16/95 from the Office of Fiscal Analysis. I cannot say that that would be applicable to the underlying bill.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Guglielmo.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

Yes. I don't think there's any doubt that this is a shift of cost from municipalities to the state. It might be called an unfunded mandate, perhaps, from the municipalities to the state, something that we've done quite often in reverse.

And I think it's appropriate, because we have to remember the basic premise. These firefighters are fighting on state property. They are taking the place of state firefighters that we once had in place and no longer have. So the municipalities are obligated, through these volunteers, to fight these fires and it's appropriate that the State of Connecticut should take care of those injured firefighters if they're doing state work.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Daily.

SEN. DAILY:

Thank you very much, Madam President. Then the answer to my question, we'll be assigning a significant cost to each and every state agency for work, for this workers' compensation expense which will take from the work that they have already been assigned to do within their very limited and in many cases, deficient

budgets.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Guglielmo.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

Yes.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Madam President. I've been working with this workers' compensation for three years and it's been a real struggle for me to try to keep those costs down, or at least help that.

What we're saying here, I don't understand how a fiscal note can say that if 169 towns all of a sudden decide that the state is paying the freight, we ought to jump on the bandwagon, that we can say we can absorb that in the budget. Then why couldn't we have absorbed some of the costs that we're talking about, workers' compensation in the budget already?

We're saying, to me this is indeterminate. I'm just trying to figure out how much of a cost this could be, if every municipality now says we have a free ride. I would prefer if you could think about PTing or PRing the bill. You don't have to, but at least to say that the municipality would absorb 50% of the cost to keep

them where they are today.

Some of those municipalities don't think they need it. And they may, at this time decide, well, now, why not, when somebody else is paying for it. So we've got no control over municipalities having to pay a cost.

I would prefer that they would have to pay 50% of the costs, whatever it costs the state so that they would be serious that they really needed those. So I think it's a very unprofessional opinion that we could absorb all those costs without knowing what they're going to be.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Guglielmo.

SEN. GUGLIELMO:

Yes, I think Madam President, we might have lost sight of the original bill. This is a very narrow bill. We're not talking about volunteer firefighters being, having their responsibilities or workers' comp costs shifted to the state in each and every case. Only in the case where they fight on state property. This is very narrow, very specific and very fair and appropriate, I feel.

THE CHAIR:

Will you comment further? If not, Mr. Clerk.

SEN. CRISCO:

Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Oh, I'm sorry. Senator Crisco, proceed.

SEN. CRISCO:

I should have stood on my chair, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good idea, and wave your hands madly.

SEN. CRISCO:

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise in support of this proposal. I have six of my towns that have volunteer fire departments and it always behooves me over the years why sometimes we are so reluctant to provide benefits for some people who are so very deserving, who contribute so much to the welfare of the community.

In regards to their availability to help preserve our forests which are on a regional basis, I think that's a very important factor that we recognize. In regards to compensating them for benefits that relate to their full-time employment as compared to their volunteerism I think is also equally important.

I think it's a just attempt to compensate those who contribute so much to the welfare of the community and save the community so many tax dollars.

THE CHAIR:

Will you comment further? If not, Mr. Clerk, would you announce there will be a roll call vote, please.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

THE CHAIR:

The machine is open. Senator Nielsen. Senator Gaffey. The machine is closed. Could you give me a tally?

THE CLERK:

Total number voting, 35; necessary for passage, 18. Those voting "yea", 35; those voting "nay", 0.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Is there further business on your desk?

I was told I didn't hammer down that the bill was passed, but bear with me. It's passed. But thank you.

SEN. UPSON:

Madam President.

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GEN. ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE

PROCEEDINGS  
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PART 18

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House of Representatives

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Clerk, please call Calendar 502.

CLERK:

On Page 14, Calendar 502, Substitute for SB 269,  
AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR  
MUNICIPAL VOLUNTEERS, as amended by Senate Amendment  
Schedule "A". Favorable report of the Committee on  
Appropriations.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the Joint  
Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill in  
concurrence with the Senate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

The question is on acceptance and passage.

Will you remark further?

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Yes. Mr. Speaker, the Clerk is in possession of  
LCO 6641. I'd ask him to please call it and may I be  
allowed to summarize?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 6641, previously  
designated Senate Amendment "A"? And the  
Representative has asked leave to summarize.

CLERK:

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LCO 6641, Senate "A", offered by Senator Fleming.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This amendment simply allows State employees to be excused from work for the purposes of being allowed to participate in training for volunteer fire fighting activities.

And I move adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

The question is on adoption.

Will you remark further? If not, we'll try your minds. All those in favor signify by saying Aye.

VOICES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Those opposed Nay?

VOICES:

No.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

The Ayes have it. Amendment "A" passes.

Will you remark further?

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Yes, just briefly, Mr. Speaker. This is a very good bill that was JF'd out of the Labor Committee that

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makes changes in the benefit rate for volunteer fire fighters. Most importantly, it increases those benefits in an attempt to help buttress our volunteer fire departments around the state.

One of the greatest problems we've had is in recruiting firemen in volunteer fire departments in small communities around the state. One reason is, especially with recent reductions in benefit rates under Workers' Compensation, any person who has a normal job and volunteers and risks his life in the line of duty as a volunteer fire fighter potentially puts his family's livelihood at stake.

And by increasing the benefit rate, it helps give the volunteers around the state a level of comfort that I think they need in order to continue on as volunteers.

And I strongly support this bill and I urge all of my colleagues here to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Representative Roraback.

REP. RORABACK: (64th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of the bill as amended. There's another

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component to the bill which merits the attention of the General Assembly. And that's so much of the bill as goes to the State's responsibilities in connection with forest fires.

Under existing statutes, the State Forest Fire Warden is empowered to commandeer any able-bodied person between the ages of 18 and 55 to fight a forest fire which breaks out anywhere in the state of Connecticut.

What this bill will do is ensure that those who answer the call of the State of Connecticut and go and fight forest fires will be extended the protection of Connecticut's Workers' Compensation system in the event they're injured in the course of fighting forest fires.

And for purposes of legislative intent, Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that Section 3 as contained in Senate Amendment "A" is intended to ensure that municipalities which are relieved of their obligation to provide Workers' Comp coverage for those volunteer fire fighters who fight forest fires will not otherwise be held liable by such volunteer fire fighters.

I strongly support passage of the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

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Representative Veltri.

REP. VELTRI: (9th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the proponent of the Amendment please?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke?

REP. VELTRI: (9th)

The bill -- I'm sorry.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Proceed.

REP. VELTRI: (9th)

Thank you. In the Amendment "A" that we've already passed, in Line 28 and 29 is it the intent that if a volunteer fire fighter resides in one town and there is a call and he is working 40 miles away, can he leave his State employment and drive to that fire or emergency?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Mr. Speaker, I had a very difficult time hearing the question. I'm sorry. If the gentleman would please repeat the question?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Veltri, would you repeat the

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question please?

REP. VELTRI: (9th)

Yes. In Line 28, 29 and 30 of Section 4, Sub-paragraph A, does any State employee with the authorization of his appointing authority be permitted to respond to fire calls during regular hours of employment without loss of pay, vacation time, sick leave, et cetera? If he is in the Glastonbury Fire Department and is working in Danbury, does he leave Danbury to go back to Glastonbury during normal working hours or is there a certain practicality about responding during his working hours on State time?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. Only with the consent of his appointing authority. And I point out in this section I believe the only change we have here is changing the word "fire man" to "fire fighter." And I think it's sort of a politically correct technical change. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Veltri.

REP. VELTRI: (9th)

It was just pointed out to me that that was

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existing language. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Belden.

REP. BELDEN: (113th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you to the gentleman bringing out the bill. As I understand the bill as now amended, the State of Connecticut will now assume all liability for any fire fighters that come under Chapter I believe it's 568, which is the Workmen's Comp Chapter, including heart and hypertension. Through you, Mr. Speaker. Is that correct?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. That's a good question. If I could have a minute, I may be able to deal with that.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Take a minute.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

It may be helpful if the gentleman could point out the specific part of the bill to which he's referring.

REP. BELDEN: (113th)

Yes. Through you, Mr. Speaker. I would refer to

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Section 2 of the file and I would refer to Section 3 of Senate "A" which implicitly indicates that the liability of municipalities shall not be affected by the implementation of Sections 1 and 2 due to the assumption of liability by the State for benefits paid pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 568.

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe Chapter 568 is Workers' Comp. And one sub of that includes heart and hypertension.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to try to grab Chapter 568.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

The Chamber will stand at ease for a moment.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

I will say that Representative Belden has caught me unawares on this question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will the Chamber stand at ease for a moment?

(House at ease)

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Mr. Speaker?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

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Will the Chamber come back to order?

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

I have received some excellent help on this. And the answer is no. The intent here is to have the State assume the liability for the Workers' Compensation should an injury arise on State property when a town's volunteer firemen are responding to a fire on State property.

The volunteer firemen are not currently covered under the heart and hypertension law, but they are covered under municipal Workers' Compensation when they are injured on the job.

And so the intent here in this language is to have the State pick up any Workers' Comp liability when municipal volunteers are fighting fires on State property. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Belden.

REP. BELDEN: (113th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you. I believe that Chapter 568 includes heart and hypertension.

REP. BELDEN: (113th)

Mr. Speaker?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

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Proceed.

REP. BELDEN: (113th)

Mr. Speaker, I've been convinced that heart and hypertension is not in Chapter 568. Based upon that, Mr. Speaker, let me just ask the gentleman whether or not there's a fiscal note for Senate "A" so we can get some idea of how much liability the State is going to assume for regular Workmen's Comp for volunteer firemen either responding to State fires or under the new language in Section 2?

It's been handed to me. If I might have just a moment, Mr. Speaker?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Chamber for their patience. There is a potential significant cost for this. And if I might, to the gentleman bringing out the bill, could he describe what the procedures would be and how these persons now covered under the State would apply for Workers' Comp and how that would be administered? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. It is my belief that it would be incumbent on the municipality to contact the State when one of their volunteers is injured while

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responding to a fire or accident on State properties and that they would work it out with the State to determine that it was, indeed, on State property and eligible for State reimbursement under this bill.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BELDEN: (113th)

Mr. Speaker, thank you. I appreciate the information.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Representative Lescoe.

REP. LESCOE: (49th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question, through you, to Representative O'Rourke. Representative O'Rourke, I have a number of fire fighters in my area that are volunteer firemen and hold down regular jobs. They also fight national major fires throughout the country. In this bill or in the statutes in the state of Connecticut would they be covered by Workmen's Comp if they were injured, say, out of state? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, are

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they injured in the line of duty fighting a fire across the state line?

REP. LESCOE: (49th)

Right. They're experts in their field. Through you, Mr. Speaker. They're experts in their field in fire fighting in major forest fires throughout the country. They're called upon. They leave their job. They are also volunteer firemen, but they across country. And if they should be injured fighting a forest fire, I was just wondering under the State Statutes or this file would they be covered? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe they would be covered, provided when they are across state lines they are doing so for the municipality for which they volunteer.

REP. LESCOE: (49th)

Right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Buonocore.

REP. BUONOCORE: (102nd)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question, through you,

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to Representative O'Rourke. Representative O'Rourke, in the fiscal impact statement it states the cost is significant. Can you give a number for "significant"?

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that it is potential significant cost. And I would say that in my opinion in the case, the worst case, of a major conflagration on State property, it's potentially big bucks. But I would say that, through you, Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate for the State to relieve a municipality of the burden of the liabilities when that municipality's volunteers are responding to a fire that is on State property.

I think under current law it is a lot to ask that municipal volunteers will not only respond on State property but then that the municipality potentially picks up a huge liability as a result of it.

So I'm very comfortable supporting this bill.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Buonocore.

REP. BUONOCORE: (102nd)

Again, Mr. Speaker, a question to the proponent of

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the bill. I'm not arguing the merits of the bill. I think we have to be fiscally responsible. And I haven't heard a number yet. We have a budget. I assume we have to stay within the restrictions of that budget. But effectively what we're being asked here is to buy a pig in a poke. And I don't support that type of legislation. And, again, I would like to get a number, if possible, from the proponent.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to place my faith that Senator Fleming would never introduce legislation to bust Governor Rowland's budget. And I do not have a number for you, Representative Buonocore. But it really depends on what happens.

And I think that the past occurrences, as far as we learned through the debate in committee, were very few and far between. And based on past experience at least, I feel comfortable to say that we're probably not going to incur a massive expense.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Buonocore.

REP. BUONOCORE: (102nd)

Again through the Speaker to the proponent of the

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bill. Section C, I think, I believe it's of a nature that you can give an answer. Can you estimate the cost for Section C?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

Section C of Senate Amendment "A"?

REP. BUONOCORE: (102nd)

Yes.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

I think that is an indeterminate -- just a minute, Mr. Speaker.

Through you, Mr. Speaker?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative O'Rourke.

REP. O'ROURKE: (32nd)

It really depends on how many of the appointing authorities allow how many workers to go out on how many days. And I cannot give a specific dollar figure to this important Amendment of the Senate Majority Leader. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Buonocore.

REP. BUONOCORE: (102nd)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to oppose Section

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C and I do it because the committee has rejected this section three years in a row and now we have it up here as rejected again this year and we have it before us again. And I oppose it on the grounds that we're setting a precedent.

Rather than having classes at a time when the typical volunteer can attend, we're asking the State to relieve people of their duty to attend classes during the day and my town and the towns around me with volunteer fire departments would not be able to take advantage of this.

So, again, we're developing two classes of citizens. And I don't support that. I would like to see Section C removed from this Amendment "A" and I can support the bill. As it stands right now, we're going to set the precedent where we start out with the State. It's going to be pressure on the municipality after this and then on local businesses. And in that light, I oppose this Amendment and the bill.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Roraback.

REP. RORABACK: (64th)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to some of the concerns raised by Representative Buonocore, the

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reason that it's difficult to get a fix on the liability that may be attendant to the passage of this bill is that much of that will depend on the frequency with which forest fires occur. And to the extent that it's difficult to presage the extent of forest fires, it defies ready calculation as to what the State's liability may be.

I can't speak strongly enough in support of the bill. And I think for purposes of legislative intent, it's important to clarify that the provisions of this bill are going to apply for forest fires wherever they occur, not only on State land. And the provisions of this bill are also going to apply not only to volunteer fire fighters but to any able-bodied member of the community who is summoned by the State Forest Fire Warden to fight the common enemy of a forest fire.

And I think that this General Assembly would be remiss and derelict in its duties to our citizenry if we don't follow through and afford them the protections which the bill offers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Representative Buonocore for the second time.

REP. BUONOCORE: (102nd)

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Mr. Speaker, thank you. To clarify my point, I'm not opposing this on forest fires. I'm only opposing it on Section C of Amendment "A" which releases people from their duty to the State for classes on fire fighting when all other volunteers have to attend those classes in the evening.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will you remark further?

REP. JARJURA: (74th)

Mr. Speaker?

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Jarjura.

REP. JARJURA: (74th)

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the Amendment. I think the volunteers deserve our thanks. No question about that. The volunteers -- well, actually, they deserve the thanks of the communities in which they come from.

But I think for the State to take over liability for the Workers' Compensation just because they on occasion fight a forest fire on State property is missing the point. I thought there was mutual aid between fire departments and if one community needed help, the other community rushed to their support in an

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emergency.

I don't remember the State of Connecticut asking somebody to cover the National Guard when each municipality had a flood or something and we had to send the National Guard into these local communities.

I think this is outrageous, Mr. Speaker. Whatever happened to a little common courtesy between communities? Now they say, "Okay. We'll help you. But you've got to cover us for our bills" and stuff like that. That's outrageous, Mr. Speaker.

This Amendment should be turned down. I don't care who it was offered by.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will you remark further?

Representative Prelli.

REP. PRELLI: (63rd)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To Representative Jarjura, the Amendment has already passed. So we're on the bill. But, Mr. Speaker, the problem with this is in the rural parts of the state where most of these towns that have the State forests and have the State parks are covered with volunteers. And the cost of the Workers' Comp on the towns is expensive for those volunteers. And any one accident can cause a dramatic effect on the Workers' Compensation insurance for any

one of those towns.

This has happened in a couple of the small towns in the Northwest corner when we've had some forest fires in the past. Prior to I think it was 1988, the State used to have teams that went out and fought forest fires. Due to budget restraints, we no longer have those teams. So what happens is it falls back as a responsibility onto the volunteer firemen.

And I will tell you as a volunteer fireman, I would gladly fight a structure fire instead of a forest fire. When you're out there fighting a forest fire, you don't know where that fire is. And the special training needed --

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

I would ask that the Chamber come to order so that we might hear what the Representative is saying.

Proceed, Representative Prelli.

REP. PRELLI: (63rd)

Just to finish. And the special training and the special risks taken on every forest fire as a volunteer shows the additional danger in fighting those types of fires.

All we're saying is this is State-owned land. They're fighting the fires in State-owned land. The State should take the responsibility. Thank you, Mr.

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Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will you remark further? If not, staff and guests to the well. Members take your seat. The machine will be open.

CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by Roll Call. Members to the Chamber. The House is voting by Roll Call. Members to the Chamber.

(Roll Call vote taken)

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Have all members voted? If all members have voted, please check the machine. Make sure that your vote is properly recorded. The machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

(Tally taken)

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

The Clerk will announce the tally.

CLERK:

SB 269 as amended by Senate "A" in concurrence with the Senate. Total number voting, 145; necessary for passage, 73; those voting Yea, 130; those voting Nay, 15; absent, not voting, six.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

The bill as amended passes.

JOINT  
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that type. They don't want to be tied down to one company, they want to work a month here and a month there. The one for a year and half though most certainly would seem that there is some problem there. If you tied a person to a job through that bill, in other words they had to go back to the temporary service and say I'm available again.

I'm not too sure I like that part of the bill, I don't think that's something, my wife if you told here she had to come back to tell them that she was available again when she finishes an assignment, would never do that type of work. She wouldn't want to be called back to go to work, she wanted to work when she wanted to work and many of these people are like that.

The understand the nature of temporary employment. I'm more concerned with the large corporations that have been doing that for a few years, laying off large numbers and bringing a lot back as consultants. And there ought to be a way to find out how many are actually working that, right now without unemployment insurance because they are self employed.

Without all those things they had while they were working for them. Make it a question.

TAMMY MACFADYEN: Yes, I agree with you. We're working on in other avenues on legislation for something on that problem. It is a big, and it's a growing problem.

REP. O'ROURKE: Okay, thank you. Steven Perruccio to be followed by John DelVecchio.

STEVEN PERRUCCIO: Good afternoon members of the committee. My name is Steven Perruccio, I'm President of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent, representing 6000 state maintenance employees. I've heard a lot of interesting testimony this morning, a lot I disagree with obviously from the business community, on the labor side I've agreed with.

I would like to go on the record opposing bills:

SB327, HB6792, HB6794, HB6443, SB981, and when I get to SB758 I would like to remind members of the committee that this is a bill that was passed in 1993, it involves negotiations right presently. Coalition of state unions and the state. I see no reason why we shouldn't give that legislation that was passed then an opportunity to work.

The legislation that you have proposed in SB758 would give OPM the right to determine the number of positions made available for unlike duty. Which totally defeats the purpose of the original legislation. We want to get people back to work back at their agency or some other agency. The problem we're having is like almost the same scenario of the CEO from Electric Boat, the amount of money they make.

Agency heads don't want to let members do work. They find that they want to stonewall, they want to prevent people from doing that. So certainly voting against this bill would be the proper way to go. In regards to SB269, municipal employees performing volunteer work for fire emergency on state owned land. This union does support that.

SB769, I think the point was made this morning, if it wasn't by the speaker is in (break in testimony - change tape) do a job he loses money after five years with a person who goes blind. I think that in itself speaks for itself. Some of the other parts that we have problems with is reducing worker's comp payments if employee receives any other pension or personal disability insurance.

Usually right now, the reason we have a lot of injuries I'd say 90%, is because in this case the state of Connecticut doesn't provide us with the equipment or the tools to properly do our job. Or in working in institutions we may be supervising inmates, or may be dealing with the mentally ill or mentally retarded who for their illness alone, some times act out violence.

Why should we cut 100% workers comp payments for when you're restraining an inmate or a patient? So that creates a lot of problems. Both with the

settlement. You know like if you get in a car accident. So they do end up, obviously their costs (break in testimony - change tape) nearly as much as it is for the employer who is uninsured and the party that's going after the money. But we do have costs involved there as well.

We don't automatically get our money just because somebody is suing somebody else. Just like if you're in car accident and there's three people involved.

REP. O'ROURKE: I understand, I understand that. You see absolutely no value at all to putting extra watch dogs out there on the block to make sure the companies buy workers' compensation insurance.

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: This was a hot topic, I think we must have spent three of those very long meetings on that. And I would say no. And that's based on the information that we got from the AG's office more than anything else.

REP. O'ROURKE: Okay, thank you. Are there any other questions? Representative Buonocore.

REP. BUONOCORE: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Bonnie back to SB269, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR MUNICIPAL VOLUNTEERS. If I heard correctly, you oppose that? (HB6118)

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: Yes.

REP. BUONOCORE: Correct me if I am wrong. If the town is including volunteers as part of the workmen's compensation plan wouldn't they have to compensate for those people as well as the full time people.

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: It's my understanding that they do. This isn't a question of whether the person was injured while performing duties for the town whether or not they'd be covered, that person would be covered. Say they are fighting a fire and they are injured, yes the town would end up paying workers' comp benefits for them.

What this attempts to do is to say that they will

Unfortunately what I see happening is just stop doing it. I mean we are not going to participate any more in those kinds of things. The people that get hurt are absolutely the charities and stuff like the money is to go to. I don't know what the answer is, but I am not going to litigate away a person's right to lawsuit if he does get hurt.

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: Well, the thing is there's certain things that.

SEN. COLAPIETRO: I mean he goes to turn to turn first base and there's a whole there and the base slips out from under him, it's still a liability no matter how you look at it. I don't think you can write laws to change that right.

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: Well, there's cases where, again it's a debate that we will have to place in the judiciary committee, but I think that's a perfect place to determine whether somebody should, whether or not certain injuries should be compensable and I'm not talking about you know, whether or not a broken arm should be compensable.

Under what circumstances should something, should somebody have, somebody such as a municipality should have to pay for something. I think again, I can't help you out there, but I would recommend that if this is a concern of yours that you take it to the Judiciary Committee, because they've discussed these issues in the past and they have the authority to do something about it.

REP. DEMARINIS: Thank you any more questions?

REP. ESPOSITO: Bonnie, just for clarification are we still talking about SB269? Because Dominic was asking about SB269 and we're going into volunteers.

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: He switched back to House Bill, (HB 6118) six something.

REP. ESPOSITO: Alright, because we were talking about injuries and I said you know it can't be because we're. Okay thank you.

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: No, he wouldn't agree with me on that one, he didn't clarify that, I knew.

REP. DEMARINIS: Thank you Bonnie.

ATTY. BONNIE STEWART: Alright.

REP. DEMARINIS: George Strutt, Dennis O'Neil.

DENNIS O'NEIL: Good afternoon members of the committee SB769 thank you for having me here today. My name is SB981 HB6793 Dennis O'Neil, I'm here representing the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. 32,000 members, 16,000 state employees and 16,000 municipal employees. I have a number of bills I would like to speak on.

I would like to be as brief as I can. With respect to SB758, AN ACT CONCERNING LIGHT DUTY EMPLOYMENT. We strongly believe that light duty employment relative to the workers' comp program is very important, however, we strongly believe that it should be a subject of collective bargaining and not a state mandate upon us.

We also strongly support HB6792, AN ACT CONCERNING A RESTORATION OF WORKERS' COMP BENEFITS. In particular it seems egregious at best that we refuse to pay the widows and orphans of workers killed on their jobs a cost of living increase, how much poverty do we need to drive these people into?

I would like to address SB269, which seems to be, and listening to some of the discussion on SB269, I was somewhat confused by it. Because SB269 seems to me to specifically deal with volunteer fire fighters who are fighting fires on basically state property and this would make the state liable for the workers' compensation cost as opposed to the municipality.

I mean currently the municipality is responsible for workers' comp, if a volunteer fire fighter gets hurt fighting a fire. It's my understanding in Sub F here specifically says that the state will be responsible if a volunteer fire fighter is injured in the line of duty while fighting a fire on state

property. For instance in a state forest. Do we support this? My opinion at this particular time? Providing workers' compensation benefits to volunteer fire fighters is a means of getting people to be volunteer fire fighters. If we didn't provide some kind of protection to these people how many volunteers would be out there fighting fires as volunteers?

So what I feel is that this bill, runs contrary to SB769, where we want to further cut workers' compensation benefits. I suggest to you that the more you cut workers' compensation benefits the more difficult it is going to be to find the volunteer fire fighters. So to do one, means necessarily to sort of undo the other and if that's the will of this body, then that's your will.

SB758, I'm sorry, SB769 is in my opinion as mean spirited and unconscionable as can be. It falls into the category of how much more blood can we squeeze out of a stone. Injured workers have paid the price in this state and it's time for it to stop.

How much more do you want? How much more can CBIA ask for? How much more relief do they need on the backs of corrections officers who take a shiv in the ribs. I'd also like to speak to SB981 and to more or less respond to Senator Colapietro's questioning of Mr. Frankel earlier. SB981 removes, utterly removes the division of workers education and rehabilitation.

Yet with SB769, once again we want to take people who are injured on the job, throw them off of workers' comp in five years, and with SB981 we don't want to retrain them, we don't want to educate them, we don't want to rehab them. We just want to throw them to the wolves.

We strongly oppose SB981, we strongly oppose SB769. And we would like to see light duty but we would like to see light duty as a subject of collective bargaining in which we have some input. We also are opposed to HB6793, AN ACT CONCERNING SEASONAL EMPLOYEES AND UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.