

HCS SCS SB 47 -- FIRE PROTECTION AND VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY RESPONSE PERSONNEL

This bill establishes the Volunteer Firefighter Job Protection Act which prohibits public and private employers from terminating an employee for becoming a volunteer firefighter or a member of the Missouri-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team, Missouri Task Force One, or Urban Search and Rescue Team or for being absent from or late to work due to his or her volunteer emergency service. If an employee is absent from or late to work due to his or her service as a volunteer firefighter or as a member of an emergency response team, the employee may lose pay and may be required to provide a written verification from his or her supervisor as to the time and date of the emergency. The volunteer firefighter or emergency response member must make a reasonable effort to notify his or her employer that he or she may be absent from or late to work due to an emergency. A volunteer firefighter or emergency response member who is terminated in violation of this provision may bring a civil action within one year against his or her employer seeking reinstatement of his or her position, benefits, seniority, and back wages. If the employee prevails, he or she is entitled to receive reasonable attorney fees and other costs associated with the civil action.

Currently, all fire protection districts, fire departments, and volunteer fire protection associations must file the name and address of the district, department, or association with the State Fire Marshal within the Department of Public Safety by October 13 of each year. Beginning January 1, 2008, the bill changes the deadline to March 1. The State Fire Marshal may conduct periodic reviews of the information on the registration forms and may deny or revoke a fire department's identification number based upon the information provided.

Fire protection districts, municipal fire departments, and volunteer fire protection associations must be the sole providers of fire suppression and related activities. Only with the approval of the governing body of any district, department, or association will any other association, organization, group, or political subdivision be authorized to provide fire suppression response and related activities. However, any ambulance service or district may provide emergency medical services and nonemergency medical transport within the geographic boundaries of a fire department.

The bill also specifies that the inspection required upon the sale or transfer of an ambulance service ownership must be limited to the verification of its compliance with standards for the renewal of an existing license.