

HCS HB 33 -- SURVIVOR BENEFITS

SPONSOR: Walker

COMMITTEE ACTIONS: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on State and Local Government by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill adds a uniformed employee of the Office of the State Fire Marshal and his or her child and spouse and specified emergency medical technicians and their children and spouses to the list of those eligible to receive a public safety officer or employee survivor grant from the Coordinating Board for Higher Education within the Department of Higher Education.

Currently, the estate of a deceased law enforcement officer, emergency medical technician, air ambulance pilot, air ambulance registered professional nurse, or firefighter can claim unpaid workers compensation and, if the Division of Workers' Compensation determines the claimant is entitled to compensation, the funds are disbursed into the decedent's estate and the entire estate is divided according to the will. If there is no will, the estate is divided as specified in Section 474.010, RSMo. The bill requires the workers compensation funds to be dispersed to the spouse or children as specified in the bill. The funds are only sent directly to the estate if there is not a surviving spouse or children.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill helps dependents of officers who gave their lives in the line of duty. It will help make the loss of a loved one a little easier and create one less burden on families.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Walker; Vernon County Ambulance District; Ambulance District Association of Missouri; Missouri State Council of Fire Fighters; George G. Wright, Missouri EMS Funeral Response Team; Rande McCrary; Missouri Ambulance Association; and James McGee, South Howell County Ambulance.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that most uniformed fire marshals are already Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission certified and would qualify under the existing statute, and those who are not covered rarely face dangerous circumstances.

Testifying on the bill was William Zieres.