



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

AB 519: Compatible Offices and Elective Officeholders
Testimony of State Representative Joel Kitchens
Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs
December 15, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Brooks, and members of the Committee on Urban and Local Affairs for holding this Public Hearing.

Currently, a fire fighter, emergency medical technician, or first responder in a city, village, or town cannot hold an elective office in that city, village, or town if they earn more than \$15,000 annually, including fringe benefits. Assembly Bill 519 will raise this limit from \$15,000 to \$25,000.

When I was approached by a first responder from my district, I was surprised to learn that the current limits would not allow for him to serve his community in the capacities he wished. Many of our communities are struggling to find people willing to serve as elective officeholders, as well as to supply a sufficient number of emergency responders. In my constituent's case, his desire to serve his community is only restrained by the \$15,000 limit. With a shortage of emergency responders, annual compensation surpasses \$15,000 for the many responders in areas with few emergency personnel.

Originally set in 1955 at \$1,000, the exemption for the annual earnings of first responders has been raised four times. Throughout the first forty years, it was increased about every ten years. It has now been 20 years since it has been increased.

The \$15,000 limit prevents some emergency personnel from serving their community in a local elective office. Dedicated public servants should not be discouraged from choosing to serve their community because of an outdated limit. Assembly Bill 519 raises the current limit from \$15,000 to \$25,000 to provide more opportunities for fire fighters, emergency medical technicians, or first responders to serve their communities as an elected official.

Thank you for your time and consideration.