

**Committee Name:**

# **Joint Survey Committee – Retirement Systems (JSC–RS)**

**Appointments**

01hr\_JSC–RS\_Appt\_pt00

**Clearinghouse Rules**

01hr\_JSC–RS\_CRule\_01–

**Committee Hearings**

01hr\_JSC–RS\_CH\_pt00

**Committee Reports**

01hr\_JSC–RS\_CR\_pt00

**Executive Sessions**

01hr\_JSC–RS\_ES\_pt00

## **Hearing Records**

### **01hr\_ab0029**

01hr\_sb0000

**Misc.**

01hr\_JSC–RS\_Misc\_pt00

**Record of Committee Proceedings**

01hr\_JSC–RS\_RCP\_pt00



# AFSCME®

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June 13, 2001

Senator Robert Wirch, Co-Chair  
Representative Dan Vrakas, Co-Chair  
Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems  
State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Wirch and Representative Vrakas:

We are very supportive of Senator Burke's Motion #216, which incorporates the provisions of 2001 Assembly Bill 29 to establish a presumption of employment-related disease for state and county firefighting personnel in the state biennial budget bill.

Our members put their lives on the line every day as part of their job, and we are pleased that this technical language will make them eligible to claim duty disability or death benefits similar to those currently available to municipal firefighters. There is an obvious connection to increased heart and lung diseases and cancer as a consequence of fighting fires.

We encourage your support of this critically important issue, and hope you will move to recommend it as good public policy.

Sincerely,

*Beth Smith*

Beth Smith, Policy Analyst  
AFSCME Council 11

cc: Members, Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems

***in the public service***

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO



Senator Burke  
Senator Plache

## EMPLOYEE TRUST FUNDS

### Establishing a Presumption of Employment-Related Disease for State and County Firefighters

Motion:

Move to incorporate the provisions of 2001 Assembly Bill 29, which would establish a presumption of employment-related disease for state and county firefighting personnel.

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Note:

This motion would extend to state and county firefighters a presumption of employment-related heart or lung disease or cancer, for the purposes of claiming duty disability or death benefits that under current law are provided to municipal firefighters.

Under current law, if a municipal firefighter claiming a benefit due to cancer has served 10 or more years as a firefighter and a qualifying medical examination was given at the time of initial employment as a firefighter and no cancer was found at the time, the finding is deemed presumptive evidence that the cancer was caused by his or her employment as a firefighter. Similarly, if a municipal firefighter claiming a benefit due to heart or respiratory impairment has served five or more years as a firefighter and a qualifying medical examination was given at the time of initial employment as a firefighter and no heart or respiratory impairment was found at the time, the finding is deemed presumptive evidence that the heart or respiratory impairment was caused by his or her employment as a firefighter.

It is estimated that for the 484 state firefighters that would be subject to this provision, additional employer-paid duty disability premium payments of \$81,500 GPR and \$99,500 (all other funds) would be paid annually. The motion would not provide any additional funding to agencies; consequently, any increased premium payments would have to be funded from base level fringe benefits funding. To the extent that an agency had insufficient base level fringe benefits funding, the agency could be supplemented from compensation reserves.

It is not known the number of county firefighters that would be subject to these provisions. However, county employers with such personnel would likely incur additional fringe benefits costs of between 0.4% and 1.0% of payroll, depending on the prior claims experience of their current employees covered by the duty disability benefit program.

# Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin, Inc.

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Member of WISCONSIN STATE A.F. of L.-C.I.O.



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June 13, 2001

Dear Chairman Wirch, Chairman Vrakas, and Committee Members:

The Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin thank the committee for an opportunity to express its opinion about an important issue. Three years ago the Wisconsin Legislature extended disability benefits to municipal firefighters who developed types of cancer presumed to be caused by job related activities. Through an oversight, county firefighters were not included, even though the intention has always been to treat them the same as municipal firefighters.

Before you today is a provision that was passed by the Joint Finance Committee in lieu of Assembly Bill 29, which is intended to correct the oversight. This motion would extend the Cancer Presumption Law to firefighters who work for county government. There are about 25 county firefighters in the state, and they work at Mitchell Airport in Milwaukee County.

We urge the Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems to support our effort to grant these disability benefits to county firefighters, and their beneficiaries, in order to equate them with the benefits already available to municipal firefighters. Both municipal and county firefighters work to save lives and property from fire. We think they should both be treated the same with respect to cancer illness caused by that endeavor. The Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin ask for your consideration and vote in favor of the Cancer Presumption Provision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rick F. Gale'.

Rick Gale  
State President