



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: December 10, 2019
RE: **Testimony on 2019 Senate Bill 556**
TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Regulatory Reform
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

I'd like to begin by thanking Senator Nass for giving me this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 556 (SB 556) today. Since the enactment of 1999 Wisconsin Act 105, the Service Award Program – which was formerly known as the Length of Service Award, or LOSA – has existed to benefit volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel upon their retirement. In fact, two members of this committee – Senators Nass and Wirch – were co-sponsors of Act 105.

Currently, 255 volunteer fire departments participate in the program, and 6,603 former volunteer firefighters and emergency personnel receive service awards. One third of the program - \$199 per volunteer – is contributed by the department's municipal jurisdiction, the other two thirds - \$398 per volunteer – comes from the state. For the vast majority of the state, there are three approved vendors which handle the funds, and the municipalities choose with whom those funds are placed – two of them pay it out to volunteer retirees in a lump sum, while one distributes an annual payment. There has been bi-partisan agreement on the efficacy and importance of this program.

Recently, there have been changes in the program that have made it more attractive for participation, but no corresponding budgetary adjustments have been made. Thus, there are currently volunteers who have not yet received the funds that they are owed this year. SB 556 remedies this delinquency by adjusting the allocation for this program so that funding is commensurate with the state's commitments. This increases the allocation for FY 2019-2020 by \$305,700 to \$2,805,700 in order to cover the current fiscal year and make up for the shortfall from FY 2018-2019, and increases the allocation for FY 2020-2021 and beyond by \$400,000 to \$2.9 million.

I hope you all will join me in supporting this legislation so that Wisconsin can keep the promise it has made to our heroes next door.

From: "Sen. Marklein" <Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Date: December 5, 2019 at 2:55:30 PM CST
To: "Sen. Marklein" <Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: My First Response to My EMS Summits

Thank you again for attending one of my "Rural Volunteer EMS Summits"!

I have been working through all of the ideas and input you provided to me along the way. Using this input, I recently drafted and circulated three bills in the legislature to address several of the largest obstacles that rural, volunteer EMS units face. I am currently working with my colleagues to garner support for this legislation.

To support rural, volunteer departments, my three bills will do the following:

Bill #1: Ambulance Staffing and Emergency Medical Personnel

1. Streamlines the application process for the Funding Assistance Program by allowing for electronic signatures and using population data derived from the census.
2. Addresses ambulance staffing requirements for interfacility transports by easing the transport requirements for low-risk, non-emergency transports.
3. Clarifies flexible staffing changes approved under 2017 Act 97 to ensure that trained personnel can perform all of the skills they are certified to do.
4. Addresses exclusive arrangements by prohibiting a department from not allowing an employee or volunteer to work or volunteer with another department.

Bill #2: National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) Test for Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs)

1. Makes the NREMT Test optional for EMRs, while still allowing individual departments to decide if the test will be required for credentialing with their department.

Bill #3: Funding Assistance Program (FAP) Funding

1. Increases funding for the FAP by \$239,800 each year to restore the program to its initial \$2.2 million allocation.

I have also attached my column for this week which describes all three bills in greater detail and will be the subject of my weekly e-update tomorrow.

Importantly, I recently met with the EMS Association on these proposals. In our meeting, the EMS Association expressed immediate opposition to Bill #1 and Bill #2. If you are a member of the EMS Association, I encourage you to contact them to express your support for these proposals.

Thank you again for your service to our communities.

Sincerely,
Howard Marklein
State Senator
17th Senate District