



State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

LRB-0217/1

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2025 ASSEMBLY BILL 187

April 15, 2025 - Introduced by Representatives SORTWELL, BEHNKE, BRILL, DONOVAN, GOEBEN, GOODWIN, B. JACOBSON, KNODL, KREIBICH, MAXEY, MURSAU, PENTERMAN, WICHGERS and KAUFERT, cosponsored by Senators JACQUE, TOMCZYK and SPREITZER. Referred to Committee on Local Government.

AN ACT *to amend* 16.25 (2), 16.25 (3) (a), 16.25 (3) (b), 16.25 (3) (c), 16.25 (3) (d), 16.25 (3) (e), 16.25 (3) (f), 16.25 (3) (j), 16.25 (3) (k) and 16.25 (4) (b); *to create* 16.25 (1) (ag) and 16.25 (3) (L) of the statutes; **relating to:** training completion awards for volunteer firefighters.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Under current law, the Department of Administration administers a service award program to provide length-of-service awards to volunteer firefighters, volunteer emergency medical responders, and volunteer emergency medical services practitioners.

This bill expands the program to provide grants to volunteer fire departments and volunteer fire companies to make training completion awards to volunteer firefighters. Under the bill, in order to receive a grant, the municipality in which a department or company is organized must have a municipal ordinance that provides a 100 percent match. The completion award for a volunteer firefighter who completes 60 hours of training is \$500. The bill also requires that any money a volunteer fire department or fire company receives beyond what it expends on awards each calendar year must be returned to DOA for deposit in the general fund. Finally, under the bill, DOA is required to provide a report to the legislature in the sixth, seventh, and eighth years after the start of the program that includes the

ASSEMBLY BILL 187**SECTION 1**

number of people who received the grant through the preceding year and the number of those people who are still firefighters in Wisconsin.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 16.25 (1) (ag) of the statutes is created to read:

16.25 (1) (ag) "Completion service award" means an award described in sub. (3) (L).

SECTION 2. 16.25 (2) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (2) The department shall administer a program to provide grants for completion service awards to volunteer firefighters, as described in sub. (3) (L), and to provide length-of-service awards, described in 26 USC 457 (e) (11), to volunteer ~~fire-fighters~~ firefighters in municipalities that operate volunteer fire departments or that contract with volunteer fire companies organized under ch. 181 or 213, to emergency medical responders in any municipality that authorizes emergency medical responders to provide emergency medical responder services, and to volunteer emergency medical services practitioners in any municipality that authorizes volunteer emergency medical services practitioners to provide emergency medical technical services in the municipality. To the extent permitted by federal law, the department shall administer the program so as to treat the length-of-service awards as a tax-deferred benefit under the Internal Revenue Code.

SECTION 3. 16.25 (3) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (a) All municipalities that operate volunteer fire departments or

ASSEMBLY BILL 187**SECTION 3**

that contract with a volunteer fire company organized under ch. 181 or 213, all municipalities that authorize emergency medical responders to provide emergency medical responder services, and all municipalities that authorize volunteer emergency medical services practitioners to provide emergency medical technical services are eligible to participate in the program with respect to length-of-service awards.

SECTION 4. 16.25 (3) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (b) Annual contributions for length-of-service awards in an amount determined by the municipality shall be paid by each municipality for each volunteer ~~fire-fighter~~ firefighter, emergency medical responder, and emergency medical services practitioner who provides services for the municipality.

SECTION 5. 16.25 (3) (c) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (c) The municipality may select from among the plans offered by individuals or organizations under contract with the department under sub. (4) for length-of-service awards for the volunteer ~~fire-fighters~~ firefighters, emergency medical responders, and emergency medical services practitioners who perform services for the municipality. The municipality shall pay the annual contributions directly to the individual or organization offering the plan selected by the municipality.

SECTION 6. 16.25 (3) (d) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (d) The department shall provide the grants under par. (L) for completion service awards, and the department shall provide a match equal to twice the amount of all annual municipal contributions paid for length-of-service

ASSEMBLY BILL 187**SECTION 6**

awards for volunteer fire fighters ~~firefighters~~, emergency medical responders, and emergency medical services practitioners up to a state match of \$390 per fiscal year, other than contributions paid for the purchase of additional years of service under par. (e), to be paid from the appropriation account under s. 20.505 (4) (er). ~~This~~ The amount for matches for length-of-service awards shall be adjusted annually on July 1 to reflect any changes in the U.S. consumer price index for all urban consumers, U.S. city average, as determined by the U.S. department of labor, for the 12-month period ending on the preceding December 31. The department shall pay all amounts that are matched under this paragraph for length-of-service awards to the individuals and organizations offering the plans selected by the municipalities.

SECTION 7. 16.25 (3) (e) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (e) A municipality may purchase additional years of service for volunteer ~~fire fighters~~ firefighters, emergency medical responders, and emergency medical services practitioners to be used for length-of-service awards. The number of additional years of service that may be purchased under this paragraph may not exceed the number of years of volunteer fire fighting, emergency medical responder service, or emergency medical technical service performed by the volunteer ~~fire fighter~~ firefighter, emergency medical responder, or emergency medical services practitioner for the municipality.

SECTION 8. 16.25 (3) (f) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (f) Except in the case of a volunteer ~~fire fighter~~ firefighter, emergency medical responder, or emergency medical services practitioner or the beneficiary of a volunteer ~~fire fighter~~ firefighter, emergency medical responder, or

ASSEMBLY BILL 187**SECTION 8**

emergency medical services practitioner eligible for a lump sum under par. (i), a vesting period of 10 years of volunteer fire fighting, emergency medical responder service, or emergency medical technical service for a municipality shall be required before a volunteer ~~fire-fighter~~ firefighter, emergency medical responder, or emergency medical services practitioner may receive any benefits under the program with respect to length-of-service awards.

SECTION 9. 16.25 (3) (j) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (j) The account of any volunteer ~~fire-fighter~~ firefighter, emergency medical responder, or emergency medical services practitioner who has not met all of the vesting requirements under the program for a length-of-service award, who has not provided volunteer fire fighting, emergency medical responder, or emergency medical technical services for a municipality for a period of 12 months or more, who does not meet any other program requirement for a length-of-service award established by the municipality, and who has not been granted a leave of absence by his or her supervisor shall be closed.

SECTION 10. 16.25 (3) (k) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (3) (k) The department shall equitably allocate all moneys in length-of-service award accounts of volunteer ~~fire-fighters~~ firefighters, emergency medical responders, and emergency medical services practitioners that have been closed to the accounts of volunteer ~~fire-fighters~~ firefighters, emergency medical responders, and emergency medical services practitioners that have not been forfeited or closed.

SECTION 11. 16.25 (3) (L) of the statutes is created to read:

ASSEMBLY BILL 187**SECTION 11**

16.25 (3) (L) The department shall provide grants for completion service awards. All of the following apply to the grants awarded under this paragraph:

1. A grant awarded under this paragraph shall be used by volunteer fire departments and fire companies to make awards to volunteer firefighters of a onetime payment of \$250 after completion of 60 hours of training.

2. For a volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company to be eligible for a grant under this paragraph, the municipality in which the department or company is organized must, by ordinance, provide payments that match the payments under subd. 1.

3. If a volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company receives a grant that exceeds the amount of the awards it makes to volunteer firefighters under subd. 1. in a calendar year, the department or company shall repay the excess money to the department of administration for deposit in the general fund.

4. Six years after the effective date of this paragraph [LRB inserts date], and for 2 years thereafter, on or before December 31, the department shall submit a report to the chief clerk of each house of the legislature under s. 13.172 (2) that includes the number of individuals who received a grant under this paragraph through the date of the report and the number of those individuals who are still firefighters in this state as of the date of the report.

SECTION 12. 16.25 (4) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

16.25 (4) (b) The department may contract with any individual or organization in the private sector that seeks to provide administrative services and investment plans required for the program for length-of-service awards, other than

ASSEMBLY BILL 187**SECTION 12**

services funded from the appropriation under s. 20.505 (4) (ec), if the individual or organization fulfills the requirements and has the qualifications established by the department under par. (a). Section 16.72 (2) (b) does not apply to any such contract.

(END)