

## LEGISLATION AFFECTING PUBLIC SAFETY

### SENATE BILL 140

pertaining to Survivor Benefits for the families of Kentucky Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Killed in the Line of Duty

#### INTRODUCED

Thursday, February 12, 2009

by

Senator Ed Worley and Senator Ray Jones

Sen. Worley's and Sen. Jones' bill would amend current statutes to increase "death in the line of duty" benefits for retirement system participants to 50% of the member's monthly final rate of pay for current and future surviving spouses. Presently, Kentucky provides a mere 25%. When the chronically low pay scale of officers and firefighters is considered, a widow and their children may receive benefits of less than \$5,000 a year when the spouse/parent and primary bread winner is killed in the line of duty.

Sen. Worley had previously publicly called on the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet to research and develop legislation providing security for the families of fallen Kentucky peace officers and firefighters at the 2008 Law Enforcement Memorial ceremony;

Kentucky lags behind other states in this remarkably simple but equally powerful issue. Public safety officers — police officers and firefighters who potentially face death in the line of duty on any work shift — deserve to know that their possible final sacrifice will not leave behind a spouse and children without some reasonable measure of financial stability.

What this action means to Kentucky officers and firefighters: For officers, the plan provides some comfort that their families will be more financially stable if any one of the officers loses his/her life in the line of duty and extends that comfort to wives/husbands and children.

### HOUSE BILL 466

pertaining to Revamping the Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund (KLEFPF)

#### INTRODUCED

Friday, February 13, 2009

by

Representative Robin Webb

Passed unanimously through the finance committee in the 2008 session, this bill was never called for a vote on the floor. It formally adds law enforcement officers employed by state government to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund (KLEFPF) and increases the annual stipend paid to all peace officers and firefighters currently covered by statute.

Rep. Webb's KLEFPF bill would raise the current stipend received by some Kentucky peace officers and firefighters from \$3,100 (where it has remained stagnant for 18 years) to \$3,500. Qualifying volunteer fire departments would rise from the current \$8,000 to \$9,000 and later to \$10,000.

The bill would also add several state-level peace officer departments not currently covered by the fund even though those peace officers must undergo the same stringent testing, training and annual updates required for other officers. Those include the officers of

- Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources,
- Alcoholic Beverage Control,
- Insurance Fraud Investigation,
- Office of Charitable Gaming,
- Kentucky Division of Animal Health (Field Enforcement),
- Kentucky Department of Parks/Ranger Division,
- Attorney General's Office and the
- Kentucky State Police.

#### ***Peace Officer Bill of Rights:***

The bill specifically insures that the Peace Officer Bill of Rights (KRS 15.520) will continue to apply to all local units of government despite the addition of any state law enforcement agency.

#### ***What this action means to Kentucky officers and firefighters:***

HB 466 will add to their modest income without burdening cities and counties with fiscal requirements they cannot meet. The modest stipend also attracts potential recruits who have been put off by low pay and helps prevent trained officers and firefighters from seeking employment elsewhere despite their skill set and the training they have attained at the state's expense.