

SCSFA Legislative Update - February 2019 (2)

Tax Relief

[Governor's FY19-20 Executive Budget](#) places an immediate and full retirement income tax exemption for military veterans and first responders, including retired state and federal law enforcement, firefighters and peace officers, representing \$20,742,570 in relief the first year. NOTE: [S.173](#) by Hembree was filed whereby tax deductions for military and first responders are provided.

[Governor's FY19-20 Executive Budget](#) states that surpluses in state government revenues do not mean we have to spend it all; a surplus means prioritizing the most critical needs in state government and returning whatever we can back to the taxpayers. This year, the State of South Carolina had \$988,890,280 in surplus revenue. After putting dollars toward needed priorities, \$200 million remains in this budget. The Department of Revenue will issue a rebate to all residents of South Carolina who filed an SC1040 – 2018 Individual Income Tax Return on or before October 15, 2019. The amount of the rebate for each individual taxpayer, regardless of filing status, will be based on the number of residents that filed a 2018 Individual Income Tax Return. The Department of Revenue will issue all rebates no later than December 15, 2019, on a basis proportional to the amount paid.

US&R Funding

[Governor's FY19-20 Executive Budget](#) places \$1 million for the Office of State Fire Marshal – Emergency Response Task Force – Urban Search and Rescue SC Task Force I (US&R SC-TF1) initiative. These funds will be used to purchase equipment and supplies from current state-approved contractors. Emergency Response Task Force responds to natural and man-made disasters by providing search and rescue, medical support, damage assessment and assistance in the coordination of relief. SC-TF1 is a search and rescue team that provides a coordinated response to disasters, particularly in urban environments. Emphasizing location and extraction of victims trapped in largely populated areas, the SC-TF1 is capable of responding to state and national disasters, including floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, widespread tornadoes and man-made technology and terrorist events. In order to succeed in its stated mission, SC-TF1 should have needed equipment and supplies that are ready for deployment at a moment's notice. The Emergency Response Task Force Division recently completed a comprehensive inventory of all of its equipment. Through this inventory process, it has identified equipment that needs replacement or updating, as well as equipment that is missing to better fulfill the capabilities of the task force. This equipment includes swift water and flood rescue equipment, medical equipment, wide area search and rescue equipment and equipment that will support the incident support team functions of the task force. If this equipment or supplies are not funded, SC-TF1's ability to respond during an emergency situation could be diminished resulting in harm to the public.

[Governor's FY19-20 Executive Budget](#) places 1 FTE for an Incident Support Team manager. One (1.00) FTE is for the State Fire Marshal's Office to serve as an Incident Support Team Manager for the Emergency Response Task Force Division. This position will lead the command and control operations to manage the operational, logistical, informational, planning and safety issues associated with complex incidents requiring firefighting and search and rescue resources. This position would manage the response of in-state and out-of-state resources to state emergencies. If this position is not granted, our state's citizens' life and safety will be put at risk as the emergency response time could increase and the effectiveness of the State's firefighting and search and rescue capabilities could decrease, which could result in loss of life.

PTSD

[Proviso 62.23](#) located in the Budget Bill directs that of the funds appropriated, one half shall go to Law Enforcement Assistance Program (SCLEAP) and the other half to SC Firefighter Assistance Support Team (FAST) to purchase insurance policies to pay out of pocket expenses for law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical service personnel when receiving treatment for PTSD. Funds may also be used to provide prevention and response initiatives to and for law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical service personnel. The program was created by the General Assembly in FY16-17 with nonrecurring funding of \$500,000. We are seeking \$500,000 in the FY19-20 Budget. **SKA met with Ways and Means Staff regarding funding Proviso at \$500,000. A House Ways and Means Proviso Subcommittee is scheduled for Tuesday, February 12, 2019, 1.5 hours after adjournment of the House. All proviso additions, deletions and changes are discussed in Proviso Subcommittee meetings.**

[S.326](#) is a Joint Resolution authored by Senator Massey that authorizes SLED to distribute \$250,000 to the SC State Firefighters Association to provide PTSD insurance and programs. S.326 has passed through the Senate and is currently in the House Ways and Means Committee. **SKA met with Ways and Means Staff. Staff recommended that S.326 be recalled from committee.**

Return to Work

By proviso passed in FY18-19 budget - retirees returning to work to be an SRO are not subject to a salary cap if they retired prior to December 31, 2017. Currently there are several bills have been filed allowing retirees to return to work without a salary cap ([S.256](#) (educators and PORS members), [H.3184](#) (educators only), [H.3185](#) (PORS members only), [H.3191](#) (SROs only), [H3620](#). (doesn't cost system because member must be retired by January 2, 2019)

Assaulting a law enforcement officer, first responder or corrections officer ABHAN

[H.3078](#) adds that assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature occurs when a person injures a federal, state, or local law enforcement officer or corrections officer, a firefighter or an emergency medical services worker in the discharge of or because of their official duties.

Ad Hoc Committee on Fire Services

This [special committee](#) is chaired by Senator Gambrell. The meeting was held on Tuesday 29, 2019 whereby it was discussed that all funds outlined in 38-7-20 (2) be used to fund the V-SAFE program pursuant to Section 23-9-25. **A bill is being prepared by staff for the committee.**

Building Codes

There is a full [Senate LCI Meeting](#) on Thursday, February 14, 2019 @ 9am in room 308 Gressette.