

South Carolina Firefighters Association January 24, 2021

FY21-22 Executive Budget: The Governor's Executive Budget

- Eliminates all state income taxes on the retirement pay of career military veterans and first responders, as well as retired state and federal law enforcement officers, firefighters and peace officers.
- Recommends adding a proviso to retain experienced Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders by exempting the earnings limitation imposed pursuant Section 9-11- 90 of the 1976 Code for retired members of the Police Officers Retirement System who retired before December 31, 2020 and return to covered employment to enhance the state's efforts to provide quality public safety. The return-to-work proviso is located in Section 108 of the Governor's Budget.

Ways and Means Constitutional Budget Subcommittee Meeting Agenda

The Constitutional Budget Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee is meeting in room 511 of the Blatt Building on Wednesday, January 27, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. to discuss provisos. It is this subcommittee that will discuss the return-to-work proviso.

- Recommends adding a proviso directing the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to distribute funds to the South Carolina Firefighter Assistance Support Team (FAST) to reimburse firefighters and emergency medical technicians who incur mental injury as a result of a critical incident during the scope of employment. \$250,000 in one-time funding for PTSD Treatment for firefighters is recommended.

Ways and Means Regulatory Budget Committee - LLR Meeting Agenda

The Transportation and Regulatory Subcommittee of Ways and Means is meeting in Room 318 Blatt on Wednesday, January 27 @ 8:30am to discuss provisos. It is this subcommittee that will discuss the PTSD proviso.

- Recommends \$850,000 in one-time funding to purchase equipment for the Emergency Response Task Force. 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.

[Ways and Means Budget Committee Schedule for South Carolina Labor Licensing and Regulatory \(LLR\)](#)

The Executive Director of the South Carolina State Firefighters Association testified during the January 21, 2020 Budget hearing of the Transportation and Regulatory Subcommittee of Ways and Means to address several items which included three items in LLR's Budget Request to include: PTSD Funding, Cancer Benefit Plan Funding and Emergency Response Task Force (US&R funding).

Senate Bills Regarding Matters Associated with the Fire Service in South Carolina

Senate Weekly Meetings

S. 94 — (PTSD) Provides that a limitation on stress, mental injuries, and mental illness for Workers' Compensation claims does not apply to a first responder diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

S. 149 — Provides that current volunteer firefighters are eligible for ad valorem tax exemption on property they own.

S. 176 — Establishes the "South Carolina Shared-Risk Defined Benefit Plan".

S. 194 — Allows a South Carolina income tax deduction of all military retirement income and first responder retirement income.

S. 196 — Revises the definition of the term "fireworks prohibited zone" to include any public beach or public beach access designated and posted by a local governing body.

S. 234 — Provides that an employer, under the South Carolina Retirement System and the Police Officers Retirement System respectively, may elect to pay all or a portion of required employee contributions during a fiscal year up to certain limits.

S. 282 — Provides that a limitation on stress, mental injuries, and mental illness for workers' compensation claims does not apply to a first responder diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

S. 328 — Deletes the earnings limitation relating to the amount of compensation that may be earned upon returning to covered employment under the Police Officers Retirement System.

S. 345 — Directs the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to promulgate certain emergency regulations to establish a mandatory, temporary standard for employers to control, prevent, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 to and among employees and employers.

S. 361 — Relates to the amount of compensation that may be earned upon returning to covered employment under the South Carolina Retirement System and the Police Officers Retirement System, respectively.

S. 401 — Allows the governing body of a county to suspend the limitation for millage increases for the purpose of supporting a fire protection district.

S. 402 — Provides that a limitation on stress, mental injuries, and mental illness for Workers' Compensation claims does not apply to a first responder diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

House Bills Regarding Matters Associated with the Fire Service in South Carolina

House of Representatives Weekly Meetings

[H. 3032](#) — Increases the amount that may be earned without affecting the monthly retirement allowance from \$10,000 to \$50,000 for covered employees in the South Carolina Retirement System and the South Carolina Police Officers Retirement System, respectively.

[H. 3038](#) — Provides that it is unlawful for a law enforcement officer or paramedic to inject ketamine into a criminal suspect as a means to incapacitate him.

[H. 3106](#) — Provides that an employer, up to certain limits, may elect to pay all or a portion of required employee contributions during a fiscal year under the South Carolina Retirement System and the Police Officers Retirement System, respectively.

[H. 3134](#) — Provides that if a participating employer in the South Carolina Retirement System or the Police Officers Retirement System, respectively, engages a certain member of the system to perform services, then the participant employer shall pay to the system the employer contribution that would be required if the member received the compensation as an active contributing member of the system.

[H. 3165](#) — Creates the "Fallen First Responder Survivor Advocate" position within the Department of Administration.

[H. 3192](#) — Establishes a presumption that a first responder, health care provider, or correctional officer contracting COVID-19 is entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits as an occupational disease.

[H. 3252](#) — Simplifies the definition of fire departments and the projects on which grant funds may be expended in the VSAFE program.

[H. 3292](#) — 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 (EMS) worker in the discharge of or because of their official duties.

[H. 3329](#) — (Joint Resolution) Provides for an exemption for close-contact service providers who were required to close by executive order of the Governor due to the COVID-19 pandemic from license renewal fee requirements and continuing education requirements until one year after they are allowed to return to work by the Governor has lapsed.

[H. 3349](#) — Allows a South Carolina income tax deduction of all military retirement income and first responder retirement income.

[H. 3557](#) — Revises the earning limitation upon return to covered employment in the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS) and Police Officers Retirement System (PORS). Increases the amount that may be earned without affecting the monthly retirement allowance from \$10,000 to \$65,000 for covered employment in the SCRS and PORS.

[H. 3380](#) — Provides a deduction for any income attributable to a person who served as a volunteer first responder during the tax year.

[H. 3466](#) — Provides procedures through which a fire department that assumes the cost of training a firefighter may be reimbursed for these costs by other fire departments that subsequently hire the firefighter within a certain period of time.

[H. 3491](#) — Enacts the "Citizen and Taxpayer Protection Act". This bill includes enhanced penalties for assault on first responder.

[H. 3541](#) — Provides that the regulation of fires by the state forester does not apply to fires used for the preparation of food or fires used in appropriate enclosures.