

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Miller Urges Senate Action on Bill to Allow Paid Firefighters to Join Volunteer FD's



With Legislature's Statutory Adjournment Looming, Action Needed Soon for Measure to Pass

With the state legislature's May 8th statutory adjournment date rapidly approaching, state Representative Lawrence G. Miller today warned that a bill that would allow paid firefighters to join volunteer fire departments in their home towns could die for lack of action if the state Senate does not vote on the measure within the next few days.

The proposal (House Bill 5646), which passed the House on a 127 – 19 vote April 17th, is still awaiting action by the state Senate, said Representative Miller, R-122nd District, a cosponsor of the measure.

“There are hundreds of firefighters throughout Connecticut who live in towns other than the ones where they work who want to join their local volunteer fire departments but are prevented from doing so under the terms of their contracts with their municipal employers,” Representative Miller said. “Those who want to retain the prohibition argue that it is needed to prevent injuries that might have financial implications for the cities where they work. However, most firefighters work other jobs on their days off that could be considered dangerous but are not prohibited under their contracts.”

“As a retired heating oil company owner, I employed several municipal firefighters over the years as delivery drivers and cannot recall any of them remaining out of work for weeks at a time or being forced to retire early because of an injury sustained while operating one of my trucks,” Representative Miller said.

“Prohibiting paid firefighters from joining local volunteer units makes no sense and hurts volunteer departments around the state that are struggling to recruit new members,” Representative Miller said. “Professional firefighters have the experience and training that volunteer companies need to more effectively protect their communities from devastating fires and natural disasters. Most firefighters who live in towns served by volunteer departments want to give back to their communities – and would gladly volunteer if they were not contractually barred from doing so.”

“This bill enjoys widespread support among professional firefighters and has strong bipartisan support in the General Assembly, where more than 90 legislators have signed on to it as cosponsors. The house overwhelmingly supported the bill last week and it would likely pass the Senate as well if it is brought to the floor for a vote. With the state

legislature's statutory adjournment date just around the corner, the Senate needs to act as soon as possible to enact this legislation. It is critical to the future of every volunteer fire department in Connecticut," Representative Miller said.