

Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighters and Paramedics Task Force

Report submitted by:

SJR 7 Task Force on Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighters
and Paramedics

Co-Chairs: Senator Patrick J. Joyce & Representative Michael J. Kelly

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Members of the Task Force

Senator Patrick Joyce, Co-Chair	Appointed by the Senate President
Representative Mike Kelly, Co-Chair	Appointed by the Speaker of The House
Senator Neil Anderson	Appointed by the Senate Minority Leader
Representative Jackie Haas	Appointed by the House Minority Leader
Chuck Sullivan, Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois	Appointed by the Senate President
Steve Shetsky, Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois	Appointed by the Senate President
Jeff Maher, Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois	Appointed by the Senate President
Kent Adams, Illinois Fire Chiefs Association	Appointed by the Senate President
Brenda Farlow, Illinois Fire Chiefs Association	Appointed by the Senate President
Nate Rice, Illinois Fire Chiefs Association	Appointed by the Senate President
Mary Alexander-Basta, Illinois Municipal League	Appointed by the Speaker of The House
Deborah Frank Feinen, Illinois Municipal League	Appointed by the Speaker of The House
Regan Stockstell, Illinois Municipal League	Appointed by the Speaker of The House
Gina Degleffetti, Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts	Appointed by the Senate Minority Leader
Jim Keiken, Illinois Fire Service Institute	Appointed by the Senate Minority Leader
Don Moffitt, Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts	Appointed by the House Minority Leader
Sue Czerwinski, Illinois Community College Systems	Appointed by the House Minority Leader
Joseph C. Holomy, Office of the State Fire Marshal	Appointed by the Governor
Robert William Van Bebber, Illinois Department of Public Health	Appointed by the Governor

Acknowledgements:

Office of the State Fire Marshal | Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois | Starved Rock State Park
 Illinois Municipal League

Executive Summary

This report is a collaborative effort by the Illinois Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighters and Paramedics Task Force, as initiated by Senate Joint Resolution 7 (SJR 7) on May 18th, 2023.

The Task Force, comprising of 19 members from 10 different organizations, including the General Assembly, was tasked with addressing various challenges related to recruiting and retaining public employee firefighters and paramedics in Illinois.

The core goals established by the resolution included:

- 1) Identifying barriers to the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 2) Steps the State of Illinois can take to assist local governments to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 3) What community colleges, the Illinois Fire Service Institute, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Office of the State Fire Marshal can do to assist local governments to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 4) How Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants can be utilized to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 5) How paramedic licensure and testing/certification requirements affect the recruitment and retainment of public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 6) The statewide hiring provisions currently in statue as an alternative method of selecting and hiring firefighters;
- 7) How apprenticeship programs (local, regional, statewide) can be utilized to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 8) How the minimum requirements to apply to an Illinois local government fire department affect the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 9) The requirement for fire department sponsorship in order to attend an Illinois fire academy;
- 10) How well the State of Illinois provides a pathway for qualified individuals to obtain the necessary skills to seek employment as a firefighter and paramedic as a public employee in the State of Illinois, and;
- 11) All other areas that the Task Force deems necessary to examine to assist in the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics.

SJR 7 commissioned the Task Force with assessing the challenges related to recruiting and retaining public employee firefighters and paramedics and identifying legislative changes to

enhance effectiveness and efficiency in these areas. The Task Force members from diverse organizations, recognized the varied perspectives stemming from geographic and demographic differences across Illinois.

Acknowledging that no single-issue lead to challenges faced in recruitment and retention, the Task Force identified common factors and proposed tailored solutions to address the needs of different regions. Despite the diverse challenges, the Task Force found common ground and recommended legislative changes to improve recruitment and retention statewide.

The Task Force believes that its recommendations will lead to a direct and positive impact on the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics in Illinois, thereby enhancing fire department and emergency medical services public safety.

Introduction

SJR 7

The goal(s) of SJR 7, The Recruiting and Retaining Public Employee Firefighters and Paramedics Task Force is “to identify solutions to the shortage of eligible applicants for the position of firefighter and/or paramedic”.

The Task Force was charged with examining the following:

- 1) Identifying barriers to the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 2) Steps the State of Illinois can take to assist local governments to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 3) What community colleges, the Illinois Fire Service Institute, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Office of the State Fire Marshal can do to assist local governments to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 4) How Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants can be utilized to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 5) How paramedic licensure and testing/certification requirements affect the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 6) The statewide hiring provisions currently in statute as an alternative method of selecting and hiring firefighters;
- 7) How apprenticeship programs (local, regional, statewide) can be utilized to recruit and retain public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 8) How the minimum requirements to apply to an Illinois local government fire department affect the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics;
- 9) The requirement for fire department sponsorship in order to attend an Illinois fire academy;
- 10) How well the State of Illinois provides a pathway for qualified individuals to obtain the necessary skills to seek employment as a firefighter and paramedic as a public employee in the State of Illinois, and;
- 11) All other areas that the Task Force deems necessary to examine to assist in the recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics.

SJR 7 Areas of Focus

The Task Force concentrated on three main areas:

1. Identify factors that negatively impact effective recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics.
2. Propose practical solutions that would improve the effective recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics.
3. Consider additional factors that may be addressed by this Task Force in the form of potential legislation.

Is there an actual issue with recruitment and retention?

As shown below, the number of firefighters in Illinois decreased by 13% from 2019 to 2023. Although some states have witnessed an increase in firefighters, there are many states that have also experienced declines in staffing.

Number of Firefighters per State (Top 5 States)

State	2019	2023	Difference
Illinois	17,180	14,950	-2,230 (-13%)
Ohio	19,200	17,320	-1,880 (-9.8%)
Florida	19,569	22,130	2,570 (+13%)
Texas	25,670	28,570	2,900 (+11.3%)
California	33,780	27,750	-6,030 (-17.9%)

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2019 & May 2023

Within the state, a random sample selection shows the number of fire department applications has also steadily declined over the years.

Local	Past	Current	Difference
Hoffman Estates	226 (2014)	27 (2023)	-199 (-88%)
Granite City	42 (1994)	4 (2023)	-38 (-90%)
Charleston	38 (1994)	0 (2023)	-38 (-100%)

Given these concerning trends, the Task Force focused its efforts in identifying the cause of the decline in firefighter staffing.

Different Perspectives

Within the Task Force, members highlighted various factors which may contribute to the challenges of recruiting eligible candidates for public employee firefighters and paramedics.

1. **Accredited Paramedic Programs:** Members identified the challenge of finding accredited paramedic programs within a reasonable geographic location as a significant barrier to recruitment. Additionally, members identified challenges with the accreditation and approval of such programs. Members also highlighted the challenges that volunteer firefighters and EMTs face in finding time for training in addition to their other responsibilities.
2. **Reduction in Pension Benefits:** Task Force members identified a potential correlation between the decline of recruitment and retention to the reduction in pension benefits resulting from P.A. 96-889, which established Tier 2. The perceived inadequacy of retirement security compared to previous tiers was cited as a deterrent for potential recruits.
3. **Minimum Age Requirement:** Members highlighted that the minimum age of 21 may be a major impediment to recruitment given that many young adults may choose other career paths right out of high school. By the time they are 21, potential firefighter and paramedic candidates may have advanced in other careers that also provide on the job training. The absence of a regional or statewide apprenticeship program expands on this challenge.

These varied perspectives underscore the multifaceted nature of the recruitment and retention issues faced by public employee firefighters and paramedics in Illinois.

Additional Obstacles

The research, testimonials, and Task Force meetings revealed several common obstacles related to paramedic training and certification processes in Illinois.

1. **Regional Approval Processes:** Members identified confusion about the approval process for the paramedic program administered by the Department of Public Health (IDPH), including the specific approval process, standards, and overseeing authorities. Members also identified that this process may be perceived as complex for applicants.
2. **Pass Rates for National Registry Paramedic Exam:** Since Illinois transitioned from a state exam to the National Registry exam in 2013, the first attempt pass rates for paramedics have fluctuated between 52% (2021) and 77% (2018), with the highest rate recorded in 2018. In 2025, the paramedic first attempt pass rate in Illinois was 72%. The fluctuation of pass rates in Table 2 shows the potential for improvement.

Table 1: 2025 Paramedic NREMT Exam Pass Rates (Selected States)

Data From: National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians 2025

*All NREMTs, not per year

State	Initial Pass Rate	3 rd Attempt	# of NREMTs
Illinois	72%	80%	15,569
Ohio	72%	81%	17,915
Florida	75%	85%	28,567
Texas	70%	78%	50,074
California	78%	84%	60,289

Data recorded on 2/11/2026.

The information in Table 1 does not represent the total number of licensed Emergency Medical Technicians in Illinois.

The total number of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) currently licensed in Illinois is 21,002.

Table 2: Illinois Paramedic NREMT Exam First Attempt Pass Rate (2013-2025)

Data From: National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians

Year	Initial Pass Rate
2013	68%
2014	71%
2015	73%
2016	75%
2017	66%
2018	77%
2019	61%
2020	55%
2021	52%
2022	54%
2023	59%
2024	68%
2025	72%

Committee Background

Makeup

By action of SJR 7, the committee is made up of legislators, mayors, fire chiefs, professional firefighters and paramedics, community college representatives, fire protection district representatives, Office of the State Fire Marshal representative, Department of Public Health representative, and a Fire Service Institute representative. All appointed members have voting rights of committee action.

Recommendations

The Task Force has proposed multiple recommendations aimed at addressing the diverse challenges associated with recruiting and retaining public employee firefighters and paramedics in Illinois.

Recommendation #1: Streamline Certification Processes and remove barriers for Firefighters.

1. Encourage the Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal to revise the current process of providing credit for certification from other states promoting easier transition for certified firefighters.
2. Provide financial assistance by the way of monetary award program (MAP grant) of \$1,000,000 for the establishment and participation in regional county apprentice programs, offering a pathway for young individuals to enter the fire service directly after high school.
3. Lower the minimum age requirement for firefighter eligibility to 18 years old, allowing for earlier entry into the profession while ensuring that retirement benefits for those completing 30 years of service are appropriately addressed.
4. Identify ways to assist active military personnel with a smooth transition into the fire service.
5. Further study of the Illinois Municipal Code and Fire Protection District Act as it relates to the hiring of full-time firefighters including but not limited to regional/statewide testing, preference points, dollars for local governments for incentives and marketing, diversity recruitment, and appointment processes.

Recommendation #2: Address Disparities in Retirement Benefits

1. Address disparities between current and future member retirement benefits, including but not limited to reciprocity issues, definitions, occupational and line of duty disability, to make the fire service more competitive with other professions and trades.

Recommendation #3: Streamline Paramedic Licensing and Program Approval Processes

1. Increase public awareness about the approval process for paramedic programs administered by the Illinois Department of Public Health.
2. Provide updates and clarify the process for paramedic licensing to increase consistency and standardization.
3. Allocate a Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant of \$5,000,000 to eliminate financial barriers for individuals seeking paramedic credentials and support full time career fire departments in providing necessary training. This should be used for the creation of community college paramedic programs, and for eligible individuals to attend a paramedic class at no cost.

Recommendation #4: Explore Regionalization for Efficiency

1. Explore opportunities for regionalization of fire protection agencies to optimize resource sharing, including apparatus, staffing, and administration, to improve response times and service delivery.
2. Given the ongoing shortage of firefighters and paramedics, consider resource optimization as a realistic option to address staffing challenges.

These recommendations aim to address the multifaceted issues impacting recruitment and retention of public employee firefighters and paramedics in Illinois and provide a comprehensive approach to improving the situation across the state. Co-chairs Senator Patrick J. Joyce and Representative Michael J. Kelly will work collectively to introduce legislation that reflects these specific recommendations.

Legislative Initiatives:

The following are bills that have been introduced based on conversations and meetings by the SJR 7 Task Force.

SB2161: CMS Fire Engine Bid Specifications

SB3018: IFA- Fire Truck Loans

Meeting Dates & Minutes



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MEETING MINUTES

Title: Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighter and Paramedic Task Force

Location: OSFM | 1035 Adlai Stevenson Dr | Springfield, IL. 62703

Date: October 24, 2023 Time: 11:00 am

Present:

Chief Kent Adams | Senator Neil Anderson | Sue Czerwinski | Gina Degleffetti | Brenda Farlow | Deborah Frank Feinen | Representative Jackie Haas | Joseph C. Holomy | Senator Patrick Joyce | Jim Keiken | Representative Mike Kelly | Jeff Maher | Don Moffitt | Steve Shetsky | Regan Stockstell | Chuck Sullivan

Not Present:

Mary Alexander Basta | Nate Rice | Robert William Van Bebber

-
- I. Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Joyce at 11:00 A.M.
 - II. Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.
 - III. Introduction of Membership
 - IV. Task Force Discussion
 - a. Extension of Task Force deadline to December 31, 2024.
 - b. Meetings will take place across the state.
 - c. Representative Moffit and Senator Joyce introduced a 2012 Emergency Medical Services Task Force report.
 - d. The task force will discuss different issues and come up with recommendations and potential bills.
 - e. Discussion on the 3 different ways that individuals can become firefighters.
 - f. Discussion on finding an easier pathway for EMS licenses.

- g. EMS positions – Hiring individuals with no experience that have to go through school and training before they can officially begin working.
 - h. Recruitment and Retention – Shortage can cause burnout and affects on their personal life.
 - i. Looking at the new generation and their priorities when looking at employers.
 - i. Work Schedules
 - ii. Firehouse Culture
 - j. Comparison of salaries across departments across the state. Many times, the northern suburbs offer higher salaries.
 - k. EMS exam has changed, and the process has become difficult. Part of the issue is new methodology and instructors learning new ways to teach the course.
 - l. Paramedics shortage is causing firefighters to respond to a higher percentage of EMS calls.
 - m. Community college classes must be approved by medical directors.
 - n. 11 regions all have different rules. Springfield alone has different EMS systems.
 - o. Statistics are not available on how many individuals apply for EMS.
 - p. Restructuring of organizations/Fire Departments will happen over time with the new and younger generations.
 - q. Looking at community colleges to be on the same page about classes and training.
 - i. What is the cost to run these programs?
 - ii. Looking at IDPH input on these training programs.
 - iii. Are exams regional?
 - r. Research information about other states and what strategies are they using.
- V. Public Comment
- a. No public comments
- VI. Adjourned: 12:07PM



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MEETING MINUTES

Title: Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighter and Paramedic Task Force

Location: Starved Rock State Park Visitor Center | 2678 E. 873 Road | Oglesby, IL. 61348

Date: December 05, 2023 Time: 11:00 am

Present:

Chief Kent Adams | Mayor Mary Alexander Basta | Sue Czerwinski | Gina Degleffetti | Brenda Farlow | Joseph C. Holomy | Senator Patrick Joyce | Jim Keiken | Representative Mike Kelly | Jeff Maher | Don Moffitt | Nate Rice | Steve Shetsky | Regan Stockstell | Chuck Sullivan | Robert William Van Bebber

Not Present:

Senator Neil Anderson | Deborah Frank Feinen | Representative Jackie Haas

- I. Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Senator Joyce at 11:02 A.M.
- II. Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.
- III. Minutes were approved with the necessary corrections.
 1. Task Force report deadline extension was approved by Legislation. OSFM to assist with the draft report preparation.
 2. Meeting will take place at Starved Rock State Park Visitor Center, Conference room.
 3. 11 regions have different rules. Springfield different EMS systems.
- IV. **Old Business**
 - A. Community college options
 - The length of the training program, will it include clinical and ride along.
 - In-person classes /online
 - Staffing issues.

- Career Fairs to engage minorities and other populations to diversify.
 - Colleges in other States have a blended training program.
- B. Cost of these challenges
- Rep. Kelly and Sen. Joyce met with Dave Gross from the Illinois Hospital Association and spoke with others via zoom concerning the challenges they would have.
 - Members from the Hospital Association willing to come to next meeting to discuss.
 - Discussion on Paramedicine-PARAM.CP/Program Expenditures handout.
 - State budget could fund community colleges.
 - Municipalities could possibly help through scholarships with restrictions.
- C. Region Uniformity
- Discussion on State Statue giving the regions the latitude.
 - A big difference in personal, care and protocol in different regions.
- D. Other
- Bolingbrook - Camp EmpowHer, female fire fighters attend a camp for a week with girls who are interested in the profession.
 - Peoria - This year started an apprenticeship program and hired three people between the ages of 18-21. They are not full time, can work no more than a max of 32 hours a week. Training offered is basic firefighter and EMT. One person is already testing for full force.
 - Discussion on National registry testing and passing percentage.
 - Discussion on the age range and pension.
 - Recruitment, getting funds from the State for high schools to offer the EMT program.
- V. New Business
- Expand the employee pool.
 - Firefighters from neighboring states.
 - What are our hurdles for getting the funds for the program?
 - Who would sign off on the program and accreditation?
 - Reduce eligibility criteria (certificates, age, education)
 - Getting the eligibility down to 19 years old.
 - A number of the locals are dropping some of the entrance requirements. Passing the written and agility test has been enough to get them in.
 - Hospital Assoc. to be present at the next meeting.

- Senator Joyce asked Task Force members to send him questions the Hospital Assoc. members could answer at the next meeting pertaining to the regions and the challenges.
- Conversation on military being exempt from some testing.

VI. Public Comment: No public comments

VII. Next Meeting: January 16, 2023, |Location: AFFI | 927 Second Street | Springfield, IL. 62704 | Time: 11:00 am

VIII. Adjourned: 12:22PM



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MEETING MINUTES

Title: Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighter and Paramedic Task Force

Location: AFFI | 927 Second Street | Springfield, IL 62704

Date: January 16, 2024 Time: 11:00AM

Present:

Chief Kent Adams | Senator Neil Anderson | Sue Czerwinski | Gina Degleffetti | Brenda Farlow | Deborah Frank Feinen | Joseph C. Holomy | Senator Patrick Joyce | Jim Keiken | Representative Mike Kelly | Jeff Maher | Don Moffitt | Nate Rice | Steve Shetsky | Chuck Sullivan | Robert Van Bebber

Not Present:

Mayor Mary Alexander Basta | Representative Jackie Hass | Regan Stockstell

- I. Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Joyce at 11:01 A.M.
- II. Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Minutes were approved – no corrections.

Task Force Discussion

- Andrew Hufnagl – Adjunct Moraine Valley Community College
- Moraine Valley has been very proactive in recruitment.
- They have worked on programing with OSFM and have created intergovernmental agreements to create internships.

Dr. Brown – Hospital System

Every region is different. There is a shortage of providers. This is a system problem.

Mr. Hufnagl: There are challenges that need to be removed because medical directors do not have enough resources. Is there potential for doctors to see this program.

Senator Joyce encouraged everyone at all levels of government to submit their suggestions. Any solution moving forward would require that the group agrees.

Senator Joyce: There are different problems depending on the region of the state. The problems in the suburbs are different than in southern IL.

Discussion on the challenges impeding standardization from each region:

Task force Questions:

1. Can we name some of the challenges that are stopping us from standardizing each region?
2. Why would level of care be different by area?
3. Why can't there be a standard if you cannot meet SOP 1 then move to SOP 2?

Guests (Memorial Hospital): Variability from every region.

- Example: Are the individuals volunteers? Rostered? What is the number of square miles? How many people are they serving?
- There is no variability on education but there are differences on functionality. The focuses that some people have in their areas are different than others.
- The level of resources is different by area. Some areas have 85+ miles to drive for treatment. Treatment looks different based on capacity.

Discussion on data and information available:

- Is there information or data on all of these districts?
- It has been difficult to find this data.
- IDPH could potentially have data.
 - IDPH: IDPH does not have that information until T-cards are received.

Discussion on Community College Incentives:

- Community colleges want to have these programs but the wording of "system medical director" makes it difficult to get programs moving. It is difficult to get the system medical direction to approve.
- Regions 7 and 8 are facing similar issues. Region 8 has staggered programs.
- There is a timeline of about one year to receive curriculum approvals. In some cases, up to 18 months.
- Consensus that more classrooms and classes would be a good thing.
 - Senator Joyce requested from the Hospital Association that information be provided to the taskforce on how to proceed collaboratively.
- Question: Is this information in state statute?
 - IDPH: What if an appeal process is created at IDPH?
 - Hospital System: There might be issues with these changes. We can work with the hospitals and community colleges.

Expanding the Employee Pool Discussion

- General consensus on the age eligibility.
- Representative Moffit will share information from a previous task force on ways to attract recruits and those incentives.

- Joe Holomy: The Finnish Government (Finland) has implemented a program that is working very well. The Task Force could potentially take a look at their program and the program in Oregon. These programs have had great success rates.

IV. Public Comment

- a. No public comments

V. Next Meeting: March 5, 2023, [Location: OSFM] 1035 Adlai Stevenson Dr | Springfield, IL. 62703 | Time: 11:00 am

VI. Adjourned: 12:05PM



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MEETING MINUTES

Title: Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighter and Paramedic Task Force

Location: OSFM | 1035 Stevenson Drive | Springfield, IL 62704

Date: March 5, 2024 Time: 11:00 A.M.

Present:

Chief Kent Adams | Sue Czerwinski | Mayor Deborah Frank Feinen | Joseph C. Holomy | Senator Patrick Joyce | Jim Keiken | Representative Mike Kelly | Jeff Maher | Don Moffitt | Chief Nate Rice | Steve Shetsky | Regan Stockstell | Chuck Sullivan | Robert Van Bebber | Representative Jackie Haas

Not Present:

Senator Neil Anderson | Mayor Mary Alexander Basta | Gina Degleffetti | Chief Brenda Farlow

- I. Meeting was called to order by Co-Chairs Senator Joyce and Representative Kelly at 11:00 AM.
- II. Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.
- III. Minutes were approved.
- IV. **Old Business**
 - A. Age eligibility (18 years old)
 - Consensus
 - Task Force Agrees with 18 years old eligibility.
 - Pensions, agree upon with requirements.
 - B. Lateral Hiring
 - Discussion:
 - Some groups would be for it, some would be against it.
If someone stays for 2 years and leaves, that municipality has spent a lot of resources on that trainee.

- Out of State Hires – Not all States have the same test/training.
- The only thing required are the credentials from NFPA, but you must challenge the Illinois State exam.
- No state statute exists that you must be certified.
- OSHA does check training records to be able to be a firefighter.
- Certification is a local issue, but it's not required by law.
- Example: Illinois Police training is different than other States.
- Is there a baseline on training? Each State would follow the NFPA baseline.
- Today, local government has control over what they accept.
- Can there be a standard of training created with ILM and OSFM?
- Training is not mandated; it is optional to municipalities.

C. Expanding the employee pool

- Testing for out of State firefighters
- Testing for members of the military
- Discussion:
 - Legislative standpoint – it already exist, Collective Bargaining Agreement.
 - Like the police, we need a training standard for everyone. Can we ask the police department what they do for out of state transfer? Federal OSHA will help.
 - Local government has the control.
 - Testing, an option but not mandate.
- Military – Equivalencies discussed.
- Paramedic Equivalencies discussed.
- National Testing for instructors, training standard would be needed.

D. Current Task Force Status (extension)

- Correction letter
- Possibly legislation

E. Community Colleges:

- Regional Testing component, pursue for the State of Illinois.
 - For example, if you test in one region, you are put on a list for another region.
 - Simplifies the process, take this into consideration when testing and hiring.
- Funding will be requested (curriculum)
 - Map Grants
 - Approximate cost of program, \$10,000 per student.
- Approval of classes

- Discussion:
 - Problem when not meeting the National Standard
 - Do we ask that instructors be nationally certified?
 - There is an issue with the passing rate because the instructors are not certified.
 - If instructors are not nationally certified, we need to ask that they also pass the exam.
 - Some instructors are grandfathered in.
 - The classes are not for the test questions to be taught but to have students be critical thinkers.

V. New Business

- A. Guest speaker, Michael Flanagan
 - Finnish Government Power Point Presentation
 - All information is from the Finnish Government power point.
 - Discussion/ Questions from the Task Force on the Presentation.
 - What is the difference between this and the MABAS agreement? They get called within 60-90 seconds.
 - We need to be more efficiency for our firefighters.
 - Volunteer departments in Illinois, lead to government mandate and efficiency.
 - Each department if separately governed. Form of government?
 - Power point is thought provoking. Good or bad idea?
 - It is possible, but it's a lot to do.
 - Better service for constituents is the end goal.
 - A large demographic area is Walton Valley in Oregon. Consolidations get factual information from them.
 - You need to take into account response time, save lives and property.
 - No increase in staffing, is their goal.

VI. Public Comment

None

VII. Next meeting date(s), time(s), and location(s)?

Task Force will convene at the call of the Co-Chairs.

Email will be sent out if the Task Force need(s) to meet again.

Meeting adjourned at 12:08 PM.



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MEETING MINUTES

Title: Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighter and Paramedic Task Force

Location: The Illinois Municipal League Assoc. | 500 E. Capitol Ave. | Springfield, IL. 62701

Date: May 1, 2024 Time: 11:00 am

Present:

Chief Kent Adams | Sue Czerwinski | Joseph C. Holomy | Senator Patrick Joyce | Representative Mike Kelly | Jeff Maher | Don Moffitt | Steve Shetsky | Chuck Sullivan | Robert Van Bebber | Gina Degleffetti | Chief Brenda Farlow | Senator Neil Anderson

Not Present:

Mayor Mary Alexander Basta | Jim Keiken | Representative Jackie Haas | Chief Nate Rice | Regan Stockstell | Mayor Deborah Frank Feinen

Agenda Details

- I. Meeting was called to order by Co-Chairs Senator Joyce and Representative Kelly at 11:01am.
- II. Roll Call was taken, and a quorum was established.
- III. Approval of Minutes
- IV. Old Business
 - i. Community Colleges
 - Task Force would need to request approximately \$5M for grants.
 - \$10,000 per student.
 - MAP grant \$2,500 towards curriculum.

- V. New Business
 - i. Potential Legislation
 - Items that the Task Force can try to work into legislation:
 - Nurse path grant
 - Age 18
 - Pensions
 - \$5M for community college funding
 - ii. Final Report Check-Ins
 - This report is not the final version but a good summary and starting point.
 - Members may reach out to OSFM with changes or suggestions.
 - The Task Force would like to continue the conversation. Potential for meetings this summer or fall.
 - Task Force asked if they could break into smaller groups.
 - Additional topics mentioned for future conversations: mental health, apprenticeship programs.
- VI. Public Comment
 - No public comment
- VII. Next meeting date, time, and location
 - Task Force will recess to the call of the Co-Chairs.
 - An email will be sent out for the next meeting.
- VIII. Meeting adjourned at 11:27am.



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MEETING MINUTES

Title: Recruiting & Retaining Public Employee Firefighter and Paramedic Task Force

Location: AFFI | 927 S. Second Street | Springfield, IL. 62704

Date: February 5, 2025 Time: 11:00 am

Present: Chief Kent Adams | Senator Neil Anderson | Sue Czerwinski | Representative Jackie Haas | Joseph C. Holomy | Senator Patrick Joyce | Jim Keiken | Representative Mike Kelly | Jeff Maher | Don Moffitt | Chief Nate Rice | Steve Shetsky | Regan Stockstell | Chuck Sullivan | Robert Van Bebber

Not Present: Chief Brenda Farlow | Mayor Deborah Frank Feinen | Gina Degleffetti

Agenda Details

- I. Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Senator Joyce at 11:02 A.M.
- II. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.
- III. Minutes were approved for March 2024 and May 2024 meetings.
- IV. Old Business – No old business
- V. New Business
 - i. Legislation
 - Potential ideas for legislation:**

Community Colleges: Changes to the Fire Service Institute Act and the Fire Protection Training Act. Remove the requirement to attend an academy. Co-chairs will be working with the community colleges on a draft. Some grants have used the IL Community College Board for their program.

Certification: An individual can attend the academy, but they don't receive a certificate until they are hired by a department. Have these rules been changed?

Challenge the State Exam: Under the rules, a person can take the exam once. If they fail the exam, they must take the course. Individuals can submit their transcripts, NFA standards, and then take the test.

How much is required in other states to become a firefighter?

Is there an appetite to accept the training from other states to become a firefighter in Illinois?

Right now, a chief from a different state can provide their documentation and become a chief in IL.

What is the pass rate for people who come from out of state?

How would we change this? Ex: Champaign requires individuals to pass the academy. Will the department accept a Tennessee Fire Marshal certification?

Would OSFM accept training from other states?

Not all states have certification programs.

Applying military training for those who would like to join the department. Are some branches of military given priority?

Path for nurses who want to join the field as well.

Lowering the Age: Lowering the age for firefighters from 21 to 18.

Makes the field more competitive.

A person may begin at 18 and serve for 30 years.

AFFI will look at legislation. There is also current legislation by Senator Halpin.

What is the impact to pensions?

Peoria has a very successful apprenticeship program for 18–21-year-olds.

Has there been consideration for a journeyman/firefighter card at the state level?

Senator Halpin has a current bill (SB193) that is similar to this idea.

National Registry: Having the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians have exams in Illinois.

Having Reciprocity- Someone who is part of the national registry can take the exam for other places.

What is the EMS fee for the exam? Can courses be scheduled more frequently?

The Co-Chairs will work to create a bill with the priorities of the Task Force. The Task Force may adjust as needed.

Other:

Representative Moffitt encouraged members to review HB1150 – Property Tax Code. The Representative mentioned that this is good public policy. It is difficult for departments who had been exempt from property taxes to have to pay them once again. This can be especially difficult for smaller departments because it could be a big expense.

- VI. Upcoming Meeting Dates: Call of the Co-Chairs
- VII. Public Comment – No public comments.
- VIII. Adjourn 11:52 A.M.

References:

Cal Fire OSFM. (2024, April). Retrieved from California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection: <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/state-fire-training/course-equivalency-reciprocity-and-challenge>

National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. (2024, April). Retrieved from National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians: <https://www.nremt.org/maps>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024, April). Retrieved from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov>

United States Census Bureau. (2024, April). Retrieved from United States Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov>

Addendum:

- Finnish report presented by Michael Flanagan, Regional Director for State Senator Patrick Joyce.





Finland is larger and less populated than Illinois

<u>State</u>	<u>Square Miles</u>	<u>Population</u>
Illinois	55,499	12,812,508
Wisconsin	<u>65,498</u>	120,997
Finland	130,681	5,541,000



Goals of the reform

- **Ultimate Goal:**
 - Reduce the frequency and severity of emergency incidents to maintain a safe quality of life.

- **Strategic Goals:**
 - Effective and efficient delivery of fire and rescue services.
 - Efficient use of professional competencies and equipment.
 - Professionally cover entire country based on risk assessments

Prerequisite for objectives

The fire and rescue services must have sufficient resources. Particularly, the number of personnel must be large enough for the organization to be able to take care of the basic tasks of incident prevention and to arrange firefighter/officer standby.

The personnel must also have diverse and in-depth expertise.

It must be possible to maintain the professional skills of the personnel through training and to also ensure the training of volunteers.

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Experts Consulted

- Senior Ministerial Adviser and Legislative Counsellor, Ministry of the Interior
- Ministry of Transport and Communications
- Director of Provincial Preparedness, Southern Finland Prefectural
- Permanent Secretary, Lapland Prefectural
- Chief of Rescue and Chief of Preparedness, Brigadier General, Defense Command
- Head of Administration, Emergency Response Centre Agency
- Development Manager, Finland Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
- Deputy Negotiation Manager, Municipal Labour Market Institute
- Mayor, Nurmes town

Experts Consulted

- Fire Chief, City of Joensuu
- Fire Chief, Lahti town
- Fire Chief, Marttila Regional Rescue Department
- Fire Chief, Pietarsaari town
- Mayor and Fire Chief, Salon town
- Fire Chief, Isokyrö municipality
- Deputy Fire Chief, Tampere town
- Mayor, Municipality of Teuva
- Contract Agent, Local Government Trade Union KTV Association
- Executive Director, Finnish Ambulance Association Ry

Stakeholders Consulted

Emergency Services Academy

AKAVA-JS Association
(E.U. Trade Union of Educators)

Finlands svenska brand- och räddningsförbund RF
(Finnish-Swedish Fire and Rescue Assoc.)

Central Union of Chimney Sweeps

Association of Finnish Fire Equipment Dealers

Finnish Fire Officers' Association

Finnish National Rescue Association SPEK
(Firefighters Union)

Finnish Red Cross

Association of Finnish Contract Fire Brigades

Confederation of Finnish Insurance Companies

Federation of Finnish Enterprises

Committee findings:

The system be changed so that services are provided in rescue service areas jointly maintained by municipalities.

All municipalities in the region should have a sufficient level of service.

In the smallest municipalities, full-time staff are often only the fire chief, and a considerable part of his or her time is spent on administrative tasks.

Committee Findings:

When determining the size of a fire and rescue service area, the key criteria are the number of full-time personnel and officers in the area as well as other resources in the area.

The new system provides a better opportunity to organize the on-call duty personnel required by management.

The annual budget of each Region should be at least FIM 25-30 million. On these grounds, approximately 20 regions would form in Finland.

Committee Findings:

The funding of rescue services organized jointly by municipalities would continue to be the responsibility of the municipalities concerned.

The same agreement would resolve the issue of ownership and leasing of equipment and fire station buildings in the rescue services area.

Committee Findings:

The fire and rescue services personnel of the joint municipal authority would have an employment contract with the joint municipal authority.

Instead of a joint municipal authority, the task could be entrusted to one of the municipalities in the region.

In this case, the fire and rescue service personnel would have a public service relationship or an employment contract with the municipality responsible for rescue services.

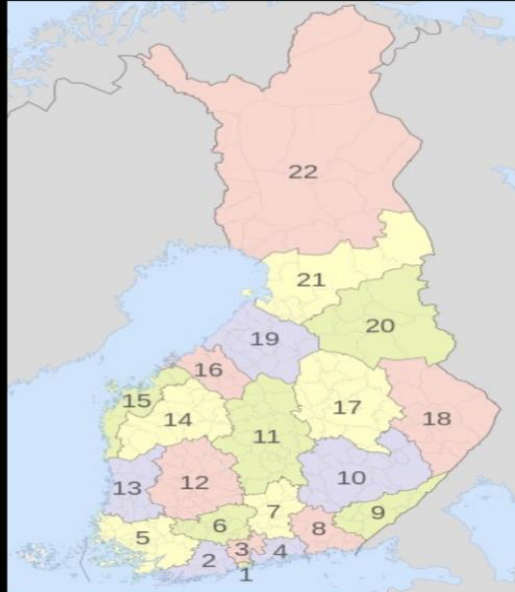
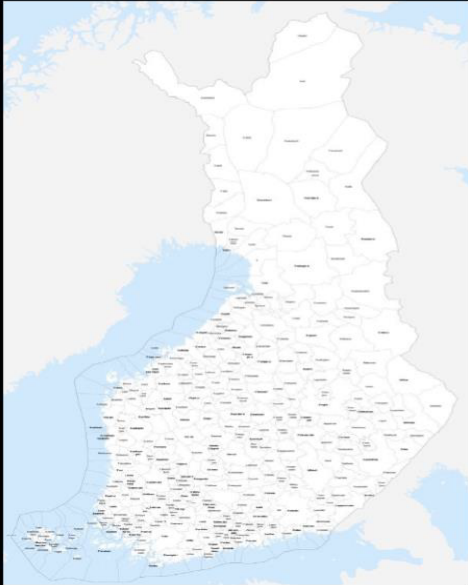
Committee findings:

The committee stresses that the reform to volunteer fire brigade operations must not jeopardized or weaken the operating conditions.

Rescue service areas should be formed in such a way that volunteer fire brigades can continue their current good and productive activities.

Endangering volunteer operations may cause considerable risks and additional financial costs.

From approx. 400 departments to 22 regions



2020
Replicated
with EMS



Government proposal 241/2020

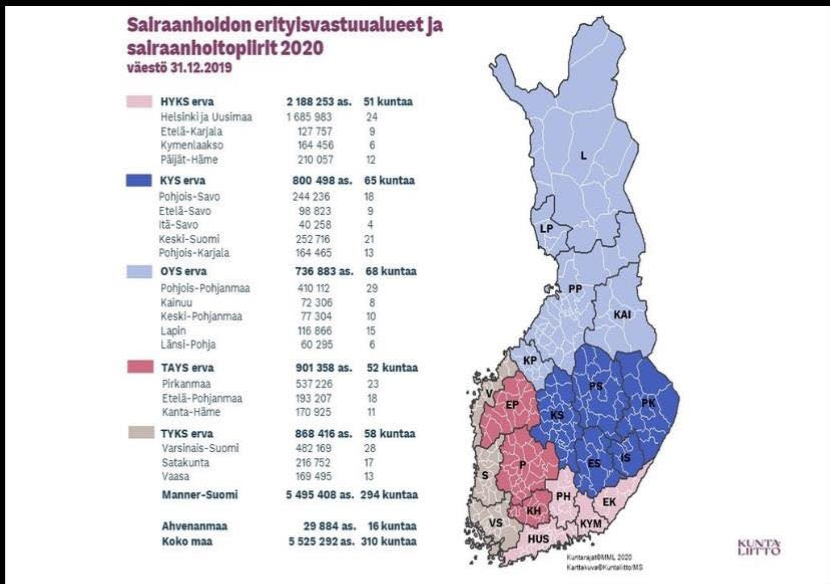
Goals:

- To improve the healthcare and fire services
- To minimise the service-level differences between the counties
- To guarantee equal services in the counties
- To improve safety
- To secure a better service-level in the counties
- Secure the level of professional firefighters
- To secure the in-house-buying process

Conclusion:

- Establish 21 wellbeing services counties
- 11 of the 21 utilized cross-trained Firefighter / Paramedics

In the future:



SMART Goals:

5 Regions

1 firefighter per 1,000 residents

Response time 60-90 seconds

Educate 2,500 full-time firefighters by 2030

Questions / Discussion

