Local Government Mandate Statement Kentucky Legislative Research Commission 2024 Regular Session

Part I: Measure Information

Bill Request #: 1696
Bill #: SB 141
Document ID #: 3974
Bill Title: AN ACT relating to volunteer firefighters.
Sponsor: Senator Phillip Wheeler
Unit of Government: X City X County X Urban-County Unified Local
X Charter County X Consolidated Local X Government
Office(s) Impacted: Volunteer fire departments; fiscal courts
Requirement: X Mandatory Optional
Effect on Powers & Duties: X Modifies Existing Adds New Eliminates Existing

Part II: Bill Provisions and the Estimated Fiscal Impact Relating to Local Government

SB 141 **Section 4** would amend KRS 75.400 to reduce from 12 to 6 the number of volunteer firefighters necessary to constitute a "volunteer fire department" as defined by the statute, in addition to other requirements of the statute.

KRS 342.140 currently provides that the workers compensation income benefit for volunteer firefighters, police, and emergency management agency members or trainees is based on the average weekly wage in their regular employment. **Section 5** of the bill would amend KRS 342.140 to establish that for volunteer firefighters, police, and emergency management agency members or trainees, workers compensation income benefits would be based on the average weekly wage in their regular employment, or on 50% of the state average weekly wage if that is greater.

Based on data collected November 2019 to May 2022 the average annual wage for police and sheriff's patrol officers was \$48,170 for an average weekly wage of \$926.35; the average annual wage for emergency medical technicians was \$30,000, for an average

weekly wage of \$576.92. These figures vary based on experience. The average annual salary for all occupations statewide was \$51,490, for an average weekly wage of \$990.19. The average annual salary for all occupations statewide was \$51,490, for an average weekly wage of \$990.19. Fifty percent of that amount would be \$495.10.

SB 141 could have an undeterminable negative fiscal impact on cities and counties in rural areas of Kentucky. It is unknown what the regular employment of volunteer firefighters, police, and emergency management members or trainees is, or their pay for that employment. Volunteer firefighters and other local government first responders injured during emergency calls are covered under the state workers compensation program that is administered by the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet with premiums paid by their employer, i.e. a city or county government. In low-wage areas of Kentucky, basing workers' compensation benefits on a statewide average wage could be a significant increase in benefits to workers and in workers compensation fund contributions by local government employers.

Information was requested from the Kentucky Association of Counties (KACO). If KACO responds this statement may be amended.

Data Source(s):Kentucky League of Cities; Kentucky Center for Statistics; LRC staffPreparer:Mary Stephens (JB)Reviewer:KHCDate:3/20/24