



State Representative

BILL KORTZ

REPORT
to the 38th

Website: www.pahouse.com/Kortz

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RepKortz

DRAVOSBURG OFFICE:
751 PITTSBURGH-MCKEESPORT BLVD.
DRAVOSBURG, PA 15034
(412) 466-1940

BALDWIN OFFICE:
5101 OLD CLAIRTON ROAD
PITTSBURGH, PA 15236
(412) 886-2870

The Boroughs of West Mifflin, Dravosburg, Glassport, Liberty, Port Vue, McKeesport, Pleasant Hills, Baldwin, Whitehall and South Park

AN UPDATE ON STATE ISSUES REGARDING OUR FIRST RESPONDERS

Dear Friend,

I want to offer a big "thank you" to all the firefighters and first responders who willingly put their lives at risk to help others. All too often, we, the general public, take for granted the seriousness and critical nature of your work and you do this while placing yourself in harm's way. This newsletter is meant to highlight state issues that may impact our emergency responders.



Local emergency responders receive state grants

The following first responder groups received state grants in 2013:

Baldwin Emergency Medical Services Inc.	Baldwin	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
Baldwin Emergency Medical Services Inc.	Baldwin	EMS	\$14,182.81
Baldwin Independent Fire Co. No. 1	Baldwin	Fire Company	\$13,295.29
Option Independent Fire Co.	Baldwin	Fire Company	\$12,161.20
South Baldwin Volunteer Fire Co.	Baldwin	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
Dravosburg Volunteer Fire Dept. No. 1	Dravosburg	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
Citizens Hose Co. No. 1	Glassport	Fire Company	\$12,000.00
Volunteer Fireman's Association of Liberty Borough	Liberty Borough	Fire Company	\$12,809.25
City of McKeesport Fire Dept.	McKeesport	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
McKeesport Ambulance Rescue Service	McKeesport	EMS	\$7,091.40
Pleasant Hills Volunteer Fire Co.	Pleasant Hills	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
Vigilant Hose Co. No. 1	Port Vue	Fire Company	\$12,789.00
Duquesne Annex Volunteer Fire Co.	West Mifflin	Fire Company	\$12,597.01
Homeville Volunteer Fire Dept. No. 1	West Mifflin	Fire Company	\$12,486.03
Skyview Volunteer Fire Co. West Mifflin No. 4	West Mifflin	Fire Company	\$12,809.25
West Mifflin Volunteer Fire Co. No. 3	West Mifflin	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
Whitehall Fire Co.	Whitehall	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
Broughton Volunteer Fire Dept.	South Park	Fire Company	\$13,619.31
Library Volunteer Fire Co.	South Park	Fire Company	\$13,458.11

L & I clears 14- and 15-year-olds to ride in emergency vehicles

Recent changes to child labor laws led to confusion regarding the legalities of 14- and 15-year-old junior firefighters riding with crews to emergency scenes.

While the language in the law removed the specific clearance for the junior responders to ride along, the state's Department of Labor and Industry, responsible for enforcing the law, has

reviewed the issue and declared that 14- and 15-year-olds still may ride along on official fire department vehicles.

This is great news, as our volunteer fire departments are finding their numbers are falling. The ability to encourage and involve our youth will hopefully lead to more volunteers as they reach the appropriate age to volunteer.

Here is a summary of recently passed legislation and bills currently working through the legislature that may affect first responders.

Act 9 of 2013

Signed into law June 17.

Restructures the E-911 Wireless Fund to maintain its solvency. Act 9 authorizes the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) to provide counties with helpful suggestions to cut costs, including joint purchasing, regionalization and consolidation. The law also eliminates a 911 center's ability to "carry forward" unpaid PEMA-approved costs.

Act 52 of 2013

Signed into law July 9.

Makes several changes to the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

This law amends the Realty Transfer Tax, making the following property transfers non-taxable:

- No-cost or token priced transfers of land from the Commonwealth or any local government agency to any volunteer fire, EMS or rescue squad.
- Transfers between two or more volunteer fire, EMS or rescue squads.

Act 92 of 2013

Signed into law Nov. 27.

Updates and improves the rules for operating small games of chance.

This new law establishes a two-tiered licensing system, with a dividing line at the \$40,000 annual limit.

Clubs that generate less than \$40,000 in proceeds from the games per year will pay a \$25 license fee and be exempt from annual reporting and background check requirements as well as the requirement to maintain a separate bank account for the funds.

Clubs that generate more than \$40,000 will pay a \$100 license fee and will be required to perform background checks and file annual reports with the commonwealth, and also maintain a separate bank account for the funds.

Additionally, once clubs have reached the \$40,000 annual threshold, proceeds must be split 70/30 with 70 percent being designated for public-interest uses and the remaining 30 percent for general operating expenses.

Additionally, the reporting threshold for prize winners has been raised to \$600, in line with current IRS standards for prize winners. The previous state limit was \$100.



Act 1 of 2014

Signed into law Jan. 22, 2014.

Allows multiple companies under one association to be reimbursed for attending statewide meetings.

Amends Title 35 (Health & Safety) to authorize two or more fire companies that share a relief association to each send a duly elected delegate to statewide or association meetings to represent their individual company and each delegate may have their reasonable expenses of travel and maintenance paid for with relief funds.

Previously, only one delegate was permitted per each relief association. This law allows equal representation and reimbursement for all companies under the same relief association.

Glassport Fire Chief Wayne Lewis presents a plaque recognizing Rep. Kortz for his support of the department last August.

The following bills are currently under consideration in the legislature:

H.B. 119 (Marshall)

H.B. 119 would establish an official flag to honor EMS members who have lost their lives in the line of duty. This would be similar to the "Firefighter's Memorial Flag," which was authorized in 1990.

The House unanimously passed this bill in April. It is currently under consideration in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

H.B. 179 (O'Neill)

H.B. 179 would amend Title 35 by requiring insurance companies to reimburse out-of-network EMS agencies directly. Under current rules, when an EMS agency provides service to a patient whose insurance does not include the EMS company in their network, the insurance company must send payment to the patient, who must then be billed by the EMS company.

By allowing direct billing, this would expedite payments to the EMS service and reduce paperwork for all involved. This bill was reported out of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee and is awaiting action in the House.

H.B. 280 (Baker)

H.B. 280 would provide for a tax credit for volunteer fire/EMS responders. Emergency responders would be able to claim a credit up to \$500 on their state tax return for fire/EMS equipment purchased with their own money. This would supplement the current tax credit which the state authorized in the 2008-09 state budget, providing for a state tax credit based on service time. This bill is currently under consideration by the House Finance Committee.

H.B. 500 (Sainato)

H.B. 500 would amend the Emergency and Law Enforcement Personnel Death Benefits Act providing for the payment of death benefits to the members of the Pennsylvania Civil Air Patrol.

Current state law provides for a \$100,000 state-paid benefit to families for first responders who lose their lives in the line of duty.

Currently, however, Pennsylvania Civil Air Patrol members, who participate in emergency response and Homeland Security, are not eligible for the benefit. This bill would erase that oversight.

The bill was reported out of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee and is awaiting action in the House.

H.B. 1041 (Hackett)

H.B. 1041 would prohibit the release of identifying information of an individual calling a 911 center, unless a court determines that it is in the best interest of the public.

This bill would limit the release of a caller's name, telephone number, address or other locating information, unless determined by a court to be in the public's interest.

This bill would ensure the privacy of anyone reporting a crime or an instance of domestic violence.

The House passed the bill unanimously in October and is currently being considered by the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

H.B. 2060 (Knowles)

H.B. 2060 would provide more money to local fire departments in two ways.

First, the bill would increase the state's annual Fire and EMS Grant Program allocation by 20 percent, to \$30 million per year.

Additionally, it would allow emergency departments who merge to qualify for grant awards under all previous departments for five years. In other words, if two departments merge, they would be eligible for two grants per year for the first five years, and then, after the fifth year, only be eligible for one grant.

Both sections of this bill would increase state aid to our first responders and would not penalize departments who realize the need to merge.

I will keep you posted as this bill progresses.

Rep. Kortz receives the 2013 Political Service Award, presented to him by Ray Burkhart from the Western Pennsylvania Fireman's Association.



FireVEST Scholarships offered

The Community College of Allegheny County, Allegheny County Fire Academy and Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald have established a scholarship program for current volunteers in exchange for a five-year volunteer commitment.

The program will provide full scholarships for 150 new recruits and 50 current volunteers for the CCAC associate's degree or certificate and training at the Fire Academy.

More than 200 firefighters have participated in the program since it was introduced in 2009.

More information can be found on the CCAC website: <http://bit.ly/1hTdQg7>.



Rep. Kortz gets a quick lesson in suiting up to fight fires as part of the Fire Ops 101 program offered at the Allegheny County Fire Academy.

Volunteer fire departments not required to provide health coverage

In early January, the U.S. Treasury Department officially announced that volunteer fire departments are not required to provide health care under the Affordable Care Act. There were many concerns that the new law treated volunteers as employees, pushing most volunteer fire companies over the 50-employee threshold for requiring health care. The statement from the Treasury Department removes any doubt about how they are to be treated. This is indeed good news for the fire departments, who could have faced financial ruin if they were required to provide the health coverage for their volunteers, which was never the intent of the health insurance law.

Rep. Kortz honors Pittsburgh first responders

In December, the House unanimously adopted three resolutions introduced by Rep.

Harry Readshaw honoring Pittsburgh's first responders.

Rep. Kortz was proud to co-sponsor all three of the resolutions, H.R. 562, which honors the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire; H.R. 563, which honors the Pittsburgh Police Department, and H.R. 56, which honors the Pittsburgh Bureau of Emergency Medical Services.

Reps. Readshaw and Kortz welcome representatives from Pittsburgh. From left: Jim Walsh, Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of Police, Legislative Committee; Joe Regan, Pittsburgh Police Department; Rep. Harry Readshaw; Rep. Kortz; Darren Kelly, Pittsburgh Fire Bureau; and John Gardell, Pittsburgh Fire Bureau.

