



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

March 2, 2015

The Honorable Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Workforce Development Committee
Oregon State Senate

Chair Dembrow & Committee Members:

SB 496 addresses a problem in statutes as it relates to the Oregon Public Safety Memorial Fund. In 1999, the Oregon Legislature created this fund to help provide benefits to the families of public safety officers. The original bill was written to address deaths or total permanent disabilities as follows: "Qualifying death or disability" means death or permanent total disability (PTD) suffered by a public safety officer while on or off duty that is the direct or proximate result of:

(a) An enforcement action, an emergency response or public safety training for an enforcement action or emergency response that the public safety officer is authorized or obligated to perform by law, rule, regulation or condition of employment or service; or

(b) An act committed against the public safety officer because of the public safety officer's position as a public safety officer.

SB 496 will correct an oversight in statute that was unintended when the original bill was created. The oversight is recognizing that some deaths are not "direct or proximate to an enforcement action," but deadly just the same such as an occupational exposure. SB 496 will add a narrow exception to the statute to address this problem by including certain compensable injuries that either result in a permanent total disability or result in the death of a public safety officer. This is an important point. SB 496 will NOT result in a significant increase in the amount of individuals who become eligible for this benefit. In fact, numbers from DCBS reveal that from 2011 through 2013 there were only 32 permanent total disabilities. Of those 32, only one was a public safety officer eligible for benefits under the law. Under SB496 for the family of a fire fighter who becomes sick with a cancer that is accepted as an on the job illness, or a police officer who becomes sick from exposure to a meth lab that is accepted as an on the job illness that results in a permanent or total disability or their death, would be eligible for benefits from the public safety memorial fund.

Whether it is an immediate death, or permanent total disability, or one that is not immediate, but result in a public safety officers death during the performance of their duties, all of these officers and their families deserve to qualify for benefits under the Oregon Public Safety Memorial Fund. SB 496 will honor these individuals who give so much in helping to keep our communities and our state safe each and every day.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Livingston
Legislative Director