

Testimony of the Pa Fire and Emergency Services Institute
March 29 2017

Chairs Ward, Tartaglione, Vulakovich and Costa
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Donald Konkle. I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Service Institute and the Law and Legislative Chair of the Fireman's Association of the State of Pennsylvania. I have been involved in the fire service since 1967, including 37 years as a member of the Harrisburg Bureau of Fire; 27 of those years as Chief.

PFESI primary mission is to identify trends and challenges facing Pennsylvania's emergency services, obtain consensus on the solutions to those challenges and to educate policy makers and the emergency services about possible solutions.

As most of you are aware the Pennsylvania Fire Service is in crisis. In 1976 there were 300,000 volunteer firefighters in Pennsylvania today there are less than 50,000.

Currently the House and Senate are addressing concerns about the condition of the fire service thru Senate Resolution 6 and the 16 initiatives introduced this session by the four caucuses. We look forward to working with you on these.

Today we are here to address the State Workers Insurance Fund. You will hear direct testimony from several witnesses today about the problems in working with SWIF on workers compensation claims. I regularly hear complainants and frustrations from firefighters concerning their attempts to deal with SWIF.

Firefighters are routinely forced to hire an attorney to represent them on a claim that has been denied by SWIF. This results in frustration not only for the individual whose claim was denied but for the members of their fire department as well. As we try stop the decline in volunteer

numbers the concerns about being treated fairly if you are injured or get cancer from your volunteer service creates a disincentive to volunteers.

Our emergency service responders like our veterans deserve to have injury claims addressed fairly; this is currently not the impression among many first responders.

We believe the formation of nonprofit insurance pool for firefighters should be explored. The goals of the pool will be better service, a fair review of claims and reduced cost. The formation of the pool is one of the issues addressed in the 16 initiatives introduced this session by the four caucuses.

Thank you I will be happy to take questions.