



# Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association

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## Please Support of Senate Bill 08-116 Volunteer Firefighter Job Security

### What the Bill Does

Protects the jobs of employees who leave work to respond to specified emergency summonses as volunteer firefighters when the employer receives written verification that the employee so responded. Exempt those employee/volunteers who are "essential personnel" to the employer.

Current law provides job protection for volunteer firefighters who are absent from work due to responding to emergencies, yet is silent on whether such firefighters should be permitted to leave work subsequent to arriving.

### Why the Bill is Needed

- The intent of this bill is to provide the means for a fire department to turn out enough volunteers to handle fires within their respective districts, at times when all volunteer firefighters are needed.
- All-volunteer fire departments account for 62% of all the fire departments in the state. These volunteer fire departments protect an estimated resident population of 646,035 persons or 13.4% of the total estimated population of the state in 2006. About 5,541 persons serve as volunteer firefighters for these departments.
- There are approximately 3,900 other volunteer firefighters that serve in the state's combination fire departments (fire departments with both career and volunteer firefighters), supplementing the paid staff.
- During 2006, the all-volunteer fire departments in the state handled an estimated 40,006 incidents of all types. Fires accounted for about 5,500 of the total incidents (13.7%).
- Except for unusual incidents, structure fires typically create the greatest demand for resources. A typical room and contents fire requires a minimum of 15 firefighters to effectively handle the situation.
- During 2006, structure fires accounted for approximately 14% of all fires reported in Colorado. Thus, it is estimated that volunteer fire departments handled a total of 772 structure fires in 2006. This is an average of 2.1 structure fires handled by volunteer fire departments, somewhere in the state, each day.
- Senate Local Government Committee heard testimony from volunteer firefighters who have been threatened with termination if they leave work to fight a fire in their community.
- The safety of firefighters and the public is compromised when there are not sufficient firefighters to fight a fire.

**"Serving the Chief Fire Officers of Colorado Since 1968"**