



ALASKA PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS

International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, CLC

February 2, 2009

Representative Charisse Millett
State of Alaska
State Capitol, Room 412
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
Representative_Charisse_Millet@legis.state.ak.us

RE: H.B. 87, Medical Benefits of Disabled Peace Officers

Dear Representative Millett,

The Alaska Professional Fire Fighters Association strongly supports H.B. 87.

This legislation will correct a serious problem in the PERS II & III retirement plans as they relate to major medical coverage for disabled public safety employees; ie: fire, police, and corrections. Under current Alaska Statutes, if a public safety employee is disabled between their 20th and 25th year of service, they and their family will not receive major medical coverage until they are 60 years old. This 'gap' in coverage does not exist with non public safety employees.

Presently, a public safety employee with 19 years of service, disabled on the job, is eligible for PERS disability benefits which include major medical coverage for self and family. Upon reaching their normal retirement at what would have been 20 years of service they are "appointed to normal retirement" and be eligible for medical coverage.

A public safety employee with 26 years of service, disabled on the job, is "appointed to normal retirement" and since that employee had 25+ years of service they receive major medical coverage as a retiree.

A public safety employee with 21 years of service, disabled on the job, is "appointed to normal retirement" and since having fewer than 25 years but more than 20, is not be eligible for major medical coverage until they reach age 60. They fall into what we have termed "The PERS Gap."

House Bill 87 closes this gap and gives public safety employees – those that risk their lives to save and protect others – job related disability benefits equal to those of all other PERS II and III employees.

Should you wish to contact me, I can be reached at 907-322-7808 or at drygas@alaskapffa.org.

Sincerely,

ALASKA PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

Mark Drygas
President

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