

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Session  
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## Representative Chuck Kopp

House Majority Leader · District 10 · Oceanview/Old Seward, Bayshore/Klatt

### **HOUSE BILL 210**

#### *Peace Officers/Firefighters: Disability* SPONSOR STATEMENT (Version A)

House Bill 210 increases the occupational disability benefit offered to disabled peace officers and firefighters from 40% of their previous gross monthly income at the time they left service due to disability to 75%. This increase would go into effect after 12 months of eligibility.

Increasing occupational disability benefits for injured peace officers and firefighters in Alaska is crucial for several reasons:

1. **High-Risk Occupations:** Peace officers and firefighters face significant risks daily, including exposure to life-threatening situations, physical dangers, and environmental hazards. Extreme weather conditions and remote locations can further elevate these risks, making the likelihood of injury even greater.
2. **Financial Security:** When first responders are injured in the line of duty, their ability to work and earn a stable income is often compromised. Enhanced disability benefits ensure that they and their families are financially secure during recovery or if they are permanently unable to return to work.
3. **Recruitment and Retention:** Competitive benefits help attract and retain skilled peace officers and firefighters. In a state like Alaska, where recruitment can be challenging due to remote and harsh conditions, strong occupational disability protections make these careers more appealing and sustainable.
4. **Acknowledgment of Service:** Increasing disability benefits demonstrates societal appreciation for the sacrifices made by first responders. It recognizes their commitment to community safety and ensures they are supported if injured while protecting others.
5. **Community Stability:** When police and fire departments are adequately supported, communities are safer and more resilient. Injured responders receiving proper care and financial assistance are more likely to recover effectively and, if possible, return to their vital roles.

House Bill 210 seeks to provide a livable wage for those who put their lives on the line for our safety and have become disabled as a result of their honorable work.