

Bryan Vincent - President  
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January 31, 2026

Re: HB 210 Letter of Support

To: The Members of the House Labor and Commerce Committee

We the members of the Alaska State Firefighters Association are writing this letter of support for HB 210, sponsored by Representative Kopp, which would increase the disability benefit to police officers and firefighters from the current occupational disability amount of 40% of the previous monthly gross income at the time they left the service to 75%.

Careers in emergency services present challenges and working conditions not seen in other career fields and couple that with working in Alaska with its unique hazards and the challenges multiply in complexity and risk to the responder.

We would like to highlight a few specific reasons why we feel that it is important to raise the disability amount for police and firefighters from 40% to 75%. Currently, the state of Alaska is experiencing a difficult time recruiting new employees to these career fields due to many factors, additionally retention has become another hurdle that departments are struggling with. Firefighters are leaving their jobs at fire departments across Alaska to take positions in other states that offer better benefits to public employees, to be thereby better able to take care of their families. The call volumes across the state are growing at a rapid rate, increasing the potential exposure to risk and therefore we feel it is imperative to stay competitive in recruitment and retention for the health of our profession and its employees. Modern building construction and the contents inside have increased the risk of exposure to carcinogens and other occupational exposures.

Secondly, the cost of living is on the rise in Alaska, and that burden is felt everywhere, urban and rural. An injury to a firefighter could be financially devastating to the member and their family,

when the disability benefit does not come close to bridging the gap, allowing the firefighter to pay their bills while they recover from the injury and are hopefully able to return to work. Increasing the benefit from 40% to 75% would allow the firefighter the ability to collect a livable wage to pay bills and focus on their health and recovery.

The work that police and firefighters do everyday, placing themselves in harm's way to protect the citizens of Alaska is dangerous and at times unpredictable. If the state of Alaska increases the disability benefit, it would help give our responders another level of protection and feel confident that in the unfortunate event they get hurt while serving, they would be able to continue to live in Alaska the place they call home and provide for their families.

Therefore, the members of the Alaska State Firefighters Association would like to give our full support for HB 210.

Respectfully,

Bryan Vincent - President  
Alaska State Firefighters Association