



Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor's Office

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March 2, 2015

The Honorable John Coghill
State Senate
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

RE: Support for SB43

Senator Coghill:

I write this letter today in support of Senate Bill 43, an act relating to immunity for a fire department and employees or members of a fire department. Thank you as well for your personal support in moving this important piece of legislation forward.

SB 43 clarifies state law to provide clear immunity protection for employees, members or trained volunteers of a fire department that provides municipal fire service pursuant to a contract with a municipality. As you are aware, most residents of the Fairbanks North Star Borough living outside of the Cities of Fairbanks and North Pole reside within one of our fire service areas – and therefore receive fire protection by one of our volunteer fire departments.

All of the Fairbanks North Star Borough fire service areas contract with non-profit corporations for fire service, most of which is ultimately provided by volunteers. SB 43 proposes to change state law to ensure that these volunteers and/or employees receive immunities provided to individuals working directly for a municipality. SB 43 also extends limited immunity to municipal and contracted fire departments.

Fire service volunteers are among the unsung heroes of our community. The sacrifices these volunteers make in the name of public safety are inspiring. All give up leisure time with family and friends to attend mandatory safety trainings and drills. Many have reported for duty on frigid nights when the bitter cold makes handling machinery, tools and vehicles hazardous. Too often, their volunteer duties include consoling neighbors faced with losses of property, heirlooms and irreplaceable family keepsakes. Finally - and most importantly - every volunteer does his or her duty with the full knowledge that they put their lives (and often their health) on the line in order to make their community a safer place.

SB 43 will not make firefighting safer. SB 43 will not reduce the days and hours that these volunteers spend away from their family and friends in the name of public safety. Rather, SB 43 will provide these fire service employees and volunteers with the legal protection to continue to perform their duty.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Luke Hopkins', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Mayor Luke Hopkins