

**NEW JERSEY STATE ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS
QUARTERLY REPORT
BY LYNN NOWAK- Porzio Governmental Affairs
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ASSEMBLYMAN ROONEY – He is not running for re-election. So next year, another Republican Assembly member will need to be appointed to the Fire Safety Commission.

NJ FIRST RESPONDERS PTSD PROTECTION ACT

A2886, Moen/S703, Beach - Provides employment protections for paid first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder under certain conditions.

A2886 passed the full Assembly unanimously on Nov 21. It was received in the Senate on Dec 1 and its next step will be consideration on the floor.

WATER COMPANY MANDATES

A1345, Mosquera/Murphy – Prohibits water companies from assessing more than one charge per fire hydrant to fire departments, fire districts or volunteer fire companies for use of fire hydrants.

A1345 was introduced on Jan 11, 2022 and referred to the Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee.

The NJ State Association of Fire Districts has proposed amendments to this bill that would also place a limit on rate increases to no more than two percent per year and prevent an effective date for a rate increase prior to the first date of the ensuing fiscal year.

A1346, Mosquera/Murphy– Requires water companies to provide representative of fire department, fire district or volunteer fire company access fire hydrants for water flow rate testing purposes.

A1346 was introduced on Jan 11, 2022 and referred to the Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee.

I have again spoken with the Asw Mosquera's COS, John Saben, and they have not heard back regarding getting the bills on the Assembly Law and Public Safety agenda. I will follow up with the chair of committee, Asm Bill Spearman and staff to find out if there is an issue in getting the bills heard in committee. We believe that Sen Madden (Asw Mosquera's running mate) is going to introduce the bills in the upper house but John is following up with Sen Madden's COS to confirm this.

I had a meeting in the spring with staff to both sponsors to discuss a plan of action to get these bills moving. Asw Mosquera has agreed to our amendments to A1345 and she has put in request to the chair of the Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee that the two bills be heard. It is apparent that these bills are on the radar of the Assembly Majority Office as the

aide to the Majority Leader has reached out to me for information about our desire to see these bills move. I am working with the two Assembly sponsors to secure a Senate sponsor, likely one of their running mates. I also continue to work with the League of Municipalities to gain their support.

CAPITAL PURCHASES

A2715, Dancer, Murphy – Permits fire districts to undertake capital projects upon resolution of board of fire commissioners. (Removes the voter approval mandate for fire district capital purchases and debt issuances.)

Introduced on Feb 14, 2022 and referred to the Assembly State and Local Government Committee.

*At our Sept 2022 meeting with her, Asw Murphy agreed to work with us on language that will accomplish the fire districts' needs and pass legislative muster. **This is one difficult lift. I think we need to regroup on this one.***

FIRE SAFETY/FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS/FIRE EXTINGUISHERS /SMOKE ALARMS

A1673, Quijano/**S996**, Ruiz – Requires fire suppression systems in new single and two-family homes.

A1673 was introduced on Jan 11, 2022 and referred to the Assembly Housing Committee. It has not yet received a hearing in committee. S996 was introduced on Jan 31, 2022 and referred to the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee.

S281, Greenstein/**A3791**, Sumter – “New Townhouse Fire Safety Act”; requires automatic fire suppression systems in new townhomes.

S281 was introduced on Jan 11, 2022 and referred to the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee. A3791 was introduced on May 2 and referred to the Assembly Housing Committee.

RAISING ALLOWABLE AGE OF SERVICE FOR FIRE CHIEFS

A2158, Verrelli/**S1367**, Scutari - Allows police chief and fire department chief members of PFRS to serve until age 67.

Signed into law by Governor Murphy, April 12, P.L. 2022, c. 9

USE OF CANNABIS BY FIREFIGHTERS

A3868, Mosquera/**S2723**, Beach – Prohibits PAID first responders from use of recreational cannabis.

A3868 was introduced on May 9 and referred to the Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee. The Senate bill was introduced on May 26 and referred to the Senate Law and Public Safety Committee.

The Cannabis Regulatory Commission issued a Guidance for Workplace back in Sept. I need to connect with Rich Braslow on this.

ELECTION-RELATED LEGISLATION

A4299, Danielsen/S3324, Zwicker - Permits county boards of elections to open certain ballot drop boxes for fire district elections

*A4299 was introduced on June 20 and referred to the Assembly State and Local Government Committee. **S3324 was introduced on Nov 14 and referred to the Senate State Government Committee.***

A3818, Haider/Rooney – Designates specific dates for fire district “special elections.”

Fortunately, this bill appears to be on the way-back burner. I think that the Association along with Woodbridge fire commissioners and the two fire unions helped to do this. There is still no Senate companion which is also a good signal.

This bill was heard by the Assembly State and Local Government Committee on May 12 along with a variety of bills, supported by the Speaker, to expand voting access. Prior to the hearing, Craig and I had a Zoom meeting with the sponsor, Asw Haider, to discuss the impetus for the bill and the problems it presents to fire districts.

I testified in opposition to the bill at the hearing, explaining how the selected dates are arbitrary and do not work with the existing calendar of dates for districts who still hold elections in February and submission of budgets to DCA. The bill was released from the Committee. Subsequently, I discovered that the designated dates are the ones set in law for school district special elections. Please note that the two firefighter unions submitted slips in opposition to the bill. The lobbyist for the PFANJ has told me that they will provide further support in opposition if needed.

I also spoke with the Chief of Staff in the Assembly Majority Office and Rich, Craig and I met with the aide in in the Majority Office who is handling the bill. The bill was heard and released by the Assembly Judiciary Committee on June 9 and I again testified in opposition. It then received a highly unusual third committee reference to Assembly Appropriations which has not considered it. There is no companion bill in the Senate. WHILE SEVERAL OTHER BILLS IN THE SPEAKER’S PACKAGE MOVED IN THE SPRING, THIS ONE DID NOT.

E-PROCUREMENT

P.L. 2018, c. 156 – I just became aware that this law allows for e-procurement by “local units of government” and thus fire districts. What brought it to my attention is a more recent Department of Community Affairs Rule Adoption (March 2022) on the topic. 5:34-5.9 and 5.10,

regarding sale or lease of real property, which specifically includes fire districts in the final adoption.

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