

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, I'm Patrick Foley. I am here on my own personal time to speak in support of funding LD 1236, An Act to Address Employee Retention of State Employees Who Are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport, as part of LD 2212.

WHY FUNDING BILL LD 1236 IS IMPORTANT

The current bill, LD 1236, pending before the Appropriation Committee outlines the importance of retaining our firefighters at the Air National Guard. It is crucial to understand that the positions at the Air National Guard Base are highly specialized in the fields of Aircraft Rescue Firefighting, Structural Firefighting, and Technical Rescue Operations. Personnel are exposed to many physical and mental hazards and stressors. We must retain our Military Firefighters, who are moving to Fire Departments with retirement benefits that are without an age requirement, to ensure high quality responders.

Firefighting personnel are charged with serving the Air National Guard community, including the Bangor International Airport aiding local communities for protection of life and property. A career in firefighting is both physically and mentally demanding. It affects an individual's health, wellness and longevity. The gear alone weighs on average 75 lbs., and the profession exposes one regularly to hazardous, extreme and challenging situations. It requires irregular work schedules, sleep patterns, meal patterns, and being absent from family events and activities. There can be very short recovery times during an incident or operational shift that compounds the effects.

WHY BILL LD 1236 OUGHT TO BE PASSED

- Retain personnel that have maximized training in this specialized field.
- Retain personnel who have a passion for serving and protecting the people of Maine.
- The Military firefighters at the Air National Guard are one of two remaining state emergency responders who have an age requirement to retire without penalty.
- The cost is minimal. There is one-time funding charge to the State and future funding is 100 percent from federal reimbursements in accordance with the Master Cooperative Agreement.
- Supports a unit of personnel that is 100% Veterans of the U.S Military.

As a legislator, I urge you to support the funding of LD1236, in support of the Air National Guard Base Military Firefighters who **Serve to Protect and Protect Those Who Serve.**

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