

*I am here concerning Bill # 6956, an Act concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage for Firefighters and Police Officers.*

*My name is Mary Miller, and I was married to William T. Miller, for 29 years. Bill was a dedicated Stamford, CT, firefighter for 24 years. My husband loved his job; he was always studying, trying to gain as much knowledge as possible to be a benefit to the Stamford Fire Dept. During one of his routine physicals, his liver was not functioning correctly, according to the report. He was first diagnosed as having Hepatitis non-A, non-B, because during that time Hepatitis C was unknown. Later he was told that he had Hepatitis C. However, my husband's illness never prevented him from working. He did not use his condition as a reason for not working. That was the type of person he was.*

*As the years went by, Bill's condition did not get any better. In 1999 he was informed that he had a malignant tumor on his liver. However, he never gave up hope. Even though we ran into road blocks dealing with the insurance companies, which no one should have to do, especially when a person is facing a life and death situation, he still kept a positive attitude. Unfortunately, at that time, he had to go out on sick leave, but believing that he was going to beat this illness so he could go back to work, and be able to retire from the Stamford Fire Dept. Bill was determined. He gave so much of his strength, faith and positive attitude to his family and friends.*

*During this time, Bill filed paperwork for Workers' Compensation but was refused and he filed a lawsuit due to that refusal. Bill died September 19, 2001. I continued the lawsuit on his behalf, which has now been going on for over six years, in total. Every time I have to go to a hearing, and have to listen to the negative remarks being made by the City, I am angry, hurt, disgusted, yet I can say nothing; and Bill is not here to defend himself. All I can do is silently shed tears. This is why I attend the hearings without my son and my daughter, though my daughter has moved. I did not want to subject them to hearing some of the negative remarks. I realize that the City is doing what it has to do, but I do not have to like it. I cannot really go on with my life, and let Bill rest in peace, because I have to relive what he went through as a firefighter at each hearing. It is so very hard—from a financial point of view, as well as the loss of my best friend, my children's father, my loved one, my husband. No one, no one at all, should have to go through this ordeal.*

*My hope is that the other firefighters, who have the same disease as Bill, will not have to wait six years to hear that they will receive Workers' Compensation. They put their lives on the line for all of us, and, please tell me, is this how the City says, "Thank you"?*