



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE JIM SHAPIRO**  
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOURTH DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM 4028  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
HOME: (203) 316-8492  
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-842-8267  
FAX: (860) 240-0206  
E-mail: Jim.Shapiro@cga.ct.gov

**MEMBER**  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

To: Chairman Ryan, Chair Prague and the Labor Committee  
From: Representative Jim Shapiro (D-144)  
Date: January 30, 2007  
Re: **HB 6956** An Act Concerning Workers' Compensation Coverage for Firefighters and Police Officers

---

Representative Ryan, Senator Prague, and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Jim Shapiro and I represent the 144<sup>th</sup> District in Stamford. It is both my pleasure and my duty to testify before you today.

It is my pleasure, of course, because Chairman Ryan's remarkably sunny disposition is reason enough to come before this Committee. But, I have a special duty to be here today as a voice on behalf of the many firemen and police who have come to this august building seeking our help.

But before I discuss what they are asking of us, let us first talk about what we ask of them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

We ask them to be braver than we are. We ask them to run into burning buildings when everyone else is running out. We ask them to walk late at night in neighborhoods we rarely visit in the daylight. On a regular basis we ask them to leave their homes, families and the protection of a normal life so that they might save our homes our families and our normal lives.

We also ask them to be extremely caring, and they are. When they arrive at the scene of a fire or an accident or an assault there are all too often human casualties. People who are hurt and the firemen and police are their first sign of help. They latch on to the first responders in whatever state they are in, and to their inestimable credit, the first

responders do not shrink away regardless of the shape of these suffering people. And let us remember that it is not always victims they are dealing with. We ask policemen to pursue, detain and incarcerate a host of criminals who have spent many years destroying their health. And they go after these criminals in spite of the risks.

So, that is what we ask of our firemen and police. To be braver than we are, to be more caring than most individuals, and to do all of this in an environment where blood, fluids, broken glass and needles are as common as paper products and microphones are to those of us in this building.

That is the tremendous responsibility we ask of them. Now let us address what they are asking of us in return. I think you will be shocked by the humility of what they are seeking.

HB 6956 provides simply that when firemen and policemen contract certain diseases—the very diseases they are most likely to get from the dangerous nature of the jobs they perform—we presume they acquired these diseases while on the job. This means treatment will be covered by Workmen's Compensation. It is a basic social compact. They agree to perform these dangerous jobs, and we agree to take care of them when they get sick from the nature of their work.

So, if a fireman tests positive for Hepatitis C, we don't treat him as if he got the disease from being somewhere he shouldn't have been. We presume he got it while performing the very hazardous duties we asked him to perform. We will be right 99 times out of 100.

And what of that 100<sup>th</sup> case, the case of the first responder who came by his communicable disease the easy way? Well, that is why this bill calls only for a presumption that may be rebutted. The government always has the opportunity to prove the illness was not contracted while in the line of duty. The government will still be able to weed out the very rare cases of abuse.

It seems to me we are asking so much of these men and women, and they are asking for so little in return. They aren't asking for bigger salaries or fancy equipment. They're not looking to work fewer hours or in safer conditions. And they're certainly not expecting any parades. All they are asking is that at the end of the day, if they do get sick, we will believe they incurred their illness while doing their very dangerous work. We will put the burden of proof on the government to say otherwise, which makes sense since all of the other burdens are placed on these folks in uniform.

I thank the Chairs very much for this opportunity to speak.