

# UNIFORMED PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

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Tuesday February 6, 2007

Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee.

My name is Gary Keating. I am the Legislative and Political Affairs Director for the Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut. The UPFFA represents approximately 4,000 career Fire Fighters in 50 local bargaining unit affiliates.

This testimony is in support of 2 bills that are before you today.

### The first is Proposed **H.B. 5707 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DIMINISHMENT OR ELIMINATION OF MUNICIPAL RETIREEE BENEFITS.**

This bill will provide protection for retired fire fighters who are unable to defend themselves from attacks upon their contractual benefits without incurring costly legal expenses. In an effort to save money, municipalities have often times sought to change retiree benefits. These actions take advantage of the most vulnerable of people, retirees, living in many cases on fixed incomes and without the resources to fight back to preserve their rights. Several private sector industries have attempted to reduce retiree benefits, even when those same benefits were included as part of the retirement agreement. In some cases, employers have tried to reduce benefits, even when those same benefits were promised in return for other concessions on the part of the employee. The exploitation of the elderly is starting to be seen in some Connecticut municipalities. In fact, the Waterbury retired fire fighters were forced to sue the municipality to protect their benefits and they were vindicated by the Connecticut Supreme Court. However, it is widely believed that without legislative intervention, similar attacks on our most vulnerable population will continue. Please act to correct these injustices and pass this bill. This is fair, just and should be considered redress of gross injustices done to the least able amongst us to protect themselves.



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**The second bill is Proposed H.B. 6075 AN ACT CONCERNING RETIREMENT CREDIT FOR MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES WHO SERVED IN THE MILITARY.**

This bill would allow veterans to purchase the amount of time that they served in the military and have such time count in calculating retirement benefits. This is the right thing to do for veterans who have put themselves in Harm's Way to protect us and our families and keep us safe. This is not a gift to the veteran but a chance to purchase the time spent protecting us. We at least owe the veterans and their families a chance at this benefit for the sacrifices that they have made. This would be a small way to say "thank you" for what they have done for the citizens of Connecticut. Please support and pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration in these matters.