

Dear sirs and madams

As a member of the Goshen Volunteer Fire Company, I have served for 39 years. Almost half of that time as a chief officer and 16 years as their Chief. I, on behalf of the company, state we oppose passage of HB 5070 which aims to include all volunteer fire departments and volunteer ambulance service under the umbrella of the DOL CONNOSHA. Currently most of the organizations do not fall under this umbrella, but rather either fall under federal OSHA and if exempted there then at the very least fall under regulations under EPA DOT and State dept of health and OEMS.

The department of labor has stated that we the volunteer providers in this state are "cowboys" I'm here to tell you in near 40 years of volunteer service we are anything but cowboys. No volunteer gets up at 2 in the morning to an alarm beeper going off, that doesn't want to come back home in 1 piece. We the volunteers are safe and I dare say have a better safety record than our CONNOSHA counterparts.

We volunteers, as I stated, do have oversight from various agencies but the most in-depth and critical is from ourselves as a group when critiquing and debriefing a completed mission. We continually redefine how we accomplish a mission, if we feel it could or should have done better. Last April, the 41 town emergency services of Litchfield county through their Litchfield County Emergency Plan Organization resolved not to support this same bill presented last year. This Group made the same resolution the year before as well. We the volunteers in the state of Connecticut, rely on our state boards and commissions as well as our representatives to act in the best interest of our volunteer groups. We unfortunately do not get paid to come and speak on a purposed bill, but don't take our silence as vote of endorsement.

The proposed bill is at best vague in definition of what a Volunteer fire or Ambulance service is. If a fire service like Kent Volunteer fire dept pays a stipend to its officers is it still volunteer? Many ambulance services in the state also pay a stipend or even have paid coverage, are they covered under this law?

This ambiguity, I feel will cost many agencies tens of thousands of dollars and the State, as it is, probably in the hundreds of thousands to resolve.

The mission of CONNOSHA, I believe, is to make a safe work environment for the State and municipal employees of Connecticut. They have now singled out fire and ambulance services but, turned a blind eye, to the countless other volunteer agencies within the state that, are as or even more dangerous than EMS or most fire operations. NUSAR a volunteer underwater search and rescue team and others in the state like them, are not included in this oversight, yet like so many... k-9 search and rescue teams ..as well as international, national and local ski patrols, ...wilderness rescue, ..high angle rope teams and the like continue to provide safe needed skill sets to Connecticut residents who find themselves in harm's way

The current system in place does work... DoI cannot point to accident after accident within the volunteer ranks because of reckless behaviors. They actually have very little factual evidence to even have brought this bill forward, other than the need to grow their bureaucracy and need more staffing to handle the hundreds of new entities being brought under their umbrella. . Is it possible that the actual motivation to continually bring this bill forward, year after year, is more ego driven than need driven.

We are glad that there was an inclusion of the amendment from last year, which limits the ability for the state to assess fines for small violations they may find in any volunteer organization and only have power to assess them if there is willful negligence resulting in serious injury or death. As we all know funds for volunteer agencies are tough to come by ...and it seems as, was the case in Kent in 2011, 1260.00 for what I understand was a minor violation, seems excessive.

As your committee reviews this Bill, for needed and effect on the state, I hope you realize that unlike the State and its political subdivisions, which are exempt from all Federal Osha oversight, all other entities in Connecticut would fall under their purview. It is true however that many of the business entities, such as my own, with less than 75 or at times 50 or 25 employees are given exemptions from some of the Federal Osha Regulations. These exemptions also apply to volunteer fire

and ambulance services, as well as others that speak directly to volunteer entities in this and every state in the union.

I implore your committee to not raise this bill and let it die in committee.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our point of view.

Respectfully

Peter A. Grusauskas

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