

Alaska State Legislature

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Representative Tom Anderson
District 19 - Anchorage

Sponsor Statement HB 31

Title: “An Act relating to the presumption of coverage for a workers' compensation claim for disability as a result of certain diseases for certain occupations”

Firefighters and emergency response professionals are regularly exposed to dangerous chemicals, fumes and blood borne pathogens. Nationwide, emergency personnel suffer from an increased probability of contracting certain cancers and illnesses. It has been shown that after exposure to a toxic substance many of the resulting illnesses can take years to manifest.

Firefighter and emergency personnel are a valuable and necessary part of any community. They risk their lives on a regular basis in order to ensure the safety and well being of their community.

Their sacrifice, which ends up costing them so dearly, demands action on our parts. By assuming a “presumption of illness” for certain professions such as firefighters and EMTs HB 31 is just such an action. This bill would make them eligible for health benefits in the case that they are diagnosed with certain cancers or illnesses described in the bill.

By enacting HB 31 we will provide coverage and security for our at risk emergency personnel. This legislation is necessary and urgent in order to protect and preserve our State’s brave men and women of the emergency response profession.

I urge your support for this bill.