



Billings County Rural Fire Protection District
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Chief Shockley 701-690-0041

March 5, 2025

To: Senate State and Local Government Committee

Subject: HB 1112 and making state employed firefighters eligible for the NDPERS Public Safety Retirement Plan

Chairwoman Roers and Committee Members, I am writing in support of allowing state employed firefighters to be eligible for the NDPERS Public Safety Defined Benefit Retirement plan. I am a lifelong resident of ND and I have been a firefighter for 25 years, both Volunteer and Career. Out of those 25 years I have been a Fire Chief for 17 of those years.

Through my years of service, I have seen the NDFS provide an excellent service to the fire departments across the state. They provide substantial assistance when it comes to helping fire departments secure funding and equipment through their grants that they obtain and disburse to the ND fire departments.

They have brought training to a new level by obtaining the fire simulation table. With this, they can simulate fires that firefighters can watch live and interact with, as well as simulate an actual response to wildland fires. This not only provides excellent training to the fire departments but it also greatly improves life/safety for all firefighters. With this simulation table the NDFS is not shy about taking the table around the state to other fire departments to share this very important training.

The NDFS has also responded to several incidents to assist the Billings County Rural Fire Protection District and myself countless time. Their response has been exceptional both with helping provide man power and helping with state resources such as the National Guard Black Hawks. While I was Incident commander when the Medora Fire of April 1, 2021, broke out, they were in contact with myself immediately and started providing assistance. They are always ready to work with the locals and assist in anyway.

I was not aware that the NDFS was not included with other firefighters in the NDPERS Public Safety Retirement Plan and this is very disheartening to me. I have seen first hand on what they encounter on their responses, and that they encounter the same types of fires and environments that any other firefighter encounters that is included under this plan.

Fire fighter retention and recruiting is defiantly a challenge in ND. Adding state employed firefighters to this retirement plan will help in both retention and recruitment to the NDFS. This would assure that they can continue to retain and hire the best individuals so they can continue to provide a very important service to the state of ND and to every fire department in the state.

I fully support this proposal.

Sincerely,

Kyle Shockley, Fire Chief
Billings County Rural Fire Prot. Dist.