

2025 SENATE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS

SB 2135

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Industry and Business Committee Fort Union Room, State Capitol

SB 2135
1/15/2025

A bill relating to the firefighter's death benefits fund.

10:00 a.m. Chairman Barta opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Barta, Vice-Chairman Boehm, Senator Klein, Senator Kessel, Senator Enget

Discussion Topics:

- Volunteer and paid professional firefighters
- Initiating events
- Inflation
- Adjusted increase
- Authority to access funds
- Insurance Regulatory Trust Fund
- Expense concerns
- Surrounding state's statues

10:00 a.m. Senator Jerry Klein, District 14, testified in favor and introduced the bill.

10:03 a.m. John Arnold, Deputy Insurance Commissioner, ND Department of Insurance, testified in favor.

10:07 a.m. Brian Paulson, Vice President of the North Dakota Fire Chief's Association, testified in favor and submitted testimony #29500.

10:09 a.m. Darren Schimke, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota, testified in favor and submitted testimony #29111.

10:12 a.m. Chairman Barta closed the hearing.

10:13 a.m. Senator Klein moved a Do Pass.

10:14 a.m. Vice-Chairman Boehm seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Jeff Barta	Y
Senator Keith Boehm	Y
Senator Mark Enget	Y
Senator Greg Kessel	Y
Senator Jerry Klein	Y

Motion passed 5-0-0.

Senator Klein will carry the bill.

10:15 a.m. Chairman Barta closed the hearing.

Additional written testimony:

Ken Wangen, Chief/President of the Carrington Fire Department/NDFCA, submitted testimony #29061 in favor.

10:16 a.m. Chairman Barta closed the hearing.

Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
SB 2135 ([25.0691.01000](#))

Industry and Business Committee (Sen. Barta, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (5 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2135 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

69TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**Testimony Senate Bill 2135 Senate Industry and Business Committee January 15th, 2025**

**Submitted by: Ken Wangen,
Fire Chief, Carrington Fire Department,
President, North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association**

Chairman Barta and members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee.

Please accept my testimony in support of the proposed legislation to amend and reenact subsection 2 of section 18-04-04 and section 18-05.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the firefighter's death benefits fund.

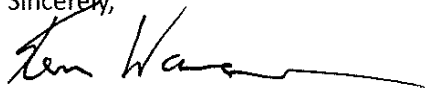
I do not have any numbers referring to how many times the Line of Duty death benefit has been accessed since its inception, respectfully North Dakota only 20 names on its Fallen Fire Fighter memorial in Garrison spanning from 1907 to date, so thankfully it is not a high use benefit and with the grace of God will continue to be that. But rest assured it is a very important benefit for the families that experience the loss of a loved one in the line of duty.

To me, as a fire fighter with over 30 years of service this legislation to increase the benefit amount to a survivor of a firefighter line of duty death is important to my family and friends, as the fire chief for the Carrington Fire Department it is reassuring to know that in the worst of times the family of a fallen fire fighter will have help, As the president of the Chiefs Association I can confidently say the increase would very much be appreciated by all Fire Services in the state.

This benefit is not one that gets much attention or notice but is extremely important to the family of the firefighter. We as fire fighters all too often are exposed to the general public's worst day, and without question do our duty to make it better despite how it affects us. This benefit relieves short term concerns for the family in ways our fire fighters cannot.

Please fully consider this legislation to increase the death benefit from \$10,000 to \$25,000. I along with the North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association respectfully request a Do Pass on SB 2135.

Sincerely,



Ken Wangen
Fire Chief Carrington Fire Department
President North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association

Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota

Darren Schimke, President | 218-779-4122 | dschimke@wiktel.com

1/15/2025

Senate Industry and Business Committee

Re: Support of SB 2135

Chairman Barta and members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee.

My name is Darren Schimke, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota. I represent 420 professional firefighters throughout the State of North Dakota. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony demonstrating our support of SB 2135.

I have been the President of the PFFND for the past 9 years and I previously held the office of President at my home Local in Grand Forks for 14 years. I've attended countless line of duty funeral services throughout the Midwest. At some of those services, I've been afforded the privilege to visit with the spouses of the fallen. One of the common denominators during those visits is funeral expenses and on-going family living expenses. Unfortunately, as some of you may know, the current death benefit of \$10,000.00 doesn't even cover funeral expenses. This leaves next to nothing to the minor children's living expenses.

In Minnesota, the line of duty monthly death benefit to the spouse is 60% of the deceased firefighter's salary. Minor dependents receive a monthly death benefit of 10% of the deceased firefighter's salary. South Dakota's line of duty monthly death benefit to the spouse is $66 \frac{2}{3}$ of the deceased firefighter's salary while the minor dependents receive a monthly allowance.

The proposed death benefit of \$25,000.00 contained within SB 2135 may just be a lifeline that I know will be appreciated beyond any of our wildest imagination.

Thank you for this opportunity. The PFFND respectfully request a Do Pass recommendation on SB 2135.

Darren Schimke

69TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Testimony Senate Bill 2135

Senate Industry and Business Committee

January 15th, 2025

Submitted by: Brian Paulson, Vice President, North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association

Chairman Barta and members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the proposed legislation to amend and reenact subsection 2 of section 18-04-04 and section 18-05.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code; relating to the firefighters death benefits fund. This legislation to increase the benefit amount to a survivor of a firefighter line of duty death is important and it is very appreciated by the fire service in North Dakota.

As the fire chief for the Jamestown Rural Fire Department, it is reassuring to know that my firefighters and their families have the support of the state of North Dakota. This benefit is not one that gets much attention or notice but is extremely important in what could be an organizations darkest hours.

As with most insurance policies or plans it is important to review these benefits from time to time and if necessary, adjust them to reflect the current times. This legislation adjusts the benefit to help meet the immediate needs of the survivors of a fallen firefighter.

This legislation reflects our North Dakota values of supporting each other in times of great need. This is truly appreciated by the North Dakota fire service, our communities we serve and our families.

The North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association fully supports this legislation to increase the death benefit from \$10,000 to \$25,000. We respectfully request a Do Pass on SB 2135.

Sincerely,



Brian Paulson

Vice President, North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association; and
Fire Chief, Jamestown Rural Fire Department

2025 HOUSE INDUSTRY, BUSINESS AND LABOR

SB 2135

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Industry, Business and Labor Committee Room JW327C, State Capitol

SB 2135
3/5/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 2 of section 18-04-05 and section 18-05.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the firefighters death benefits fund.

2:18 p.m. Chairman Warrey opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Warrey, Vice Chairman Ostlie, Vice Chairman Johnson, Representatives Finley-DeVile, Grindberg, Kasper, Koppelman, D. Ruby, Schatz, Schauer, Vollmer

Members Absent: Representatives Bahl, Brown

Discussion Topics:

- Training and safety
- Premium property taxes
- Volunteer & professional firefighters
- Lifeline
- Full time 693
- WSI Premium

2:18 p.m. Senator Jerry Klein, District 14, Fessenden, ND, introduced and testified.

2:24 p.m. John R. Arnold, Deputy Commissioner, North Dakota Insurance Department, testified in favor and submitted testimony #38913.

2:37 p.m. Kenneth D. Wangen, President, North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association, Fire Chief, Carrington Fire Department, testified in favor and submitted testimony #38855.

2:39 p.m. Darren Schmike, President, Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota, testified in favor and submitted testimony #38710.

2:59 p.m. Representative D. Ruby moved Do Pass

2:59 p.m. Representative Vollmer seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Jonathan Warrey	Y
Representative Mitch Ostlie	Y
Representative Jorin Johnson	Y

Representative Landon Bahl	AB
Representative Collette Brown	AB
Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille	Y
Representative Karen Grindberg	Y
Representative Jim Kasper	AB
Representative Ben Koppelman	AB
Representative Dan Ruby	Y
Representative Mike Schatz	Y
Representative Austin Schauer	Y
Representative Daniel R. Vollmer	Y

Motion passed 9-0-4

3:01 p.m. Representative Warrey will carry the bill.

3:01 p.m. Chairman Warrey closed the meeting.

Diane Lillis, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
SB 2135 ([25.0691.01000](#))

Industry, Business and Labor Committee (Rep. Warrey, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (9 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 4 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). SB 2135 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.

Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota

Darren Schimke, President | 218-779-4122 | dschimke@wiktel.com

3/5/2025

House Industry, Business and Labor Committee

Re: Support of SB 2135

Chairman Warrey and members of the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee.

My name is Darren Schimke, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota. I represent 420 professional firefighters throughout the State of North Dakota. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony demonstrating our support of SB 2135.

I have been the President of the PFFND for the past 9 years and I previously held the office of President at my home Local in Grand Forks for 14 years. I've attended countless line of duty funeral services throughout the Midwest. At some of those services, I've been afforded the privilege to visit with the spouses of the fallen. One of the common denominators during those visits is funeral expenses and on-going family living expenses. As much as the current death benefit is appreciated, unfortunately, as some of you may know, said death benefit of \$10,000.00 won't cover funeral expenses. This leaves next to nothing for the minor children's living expenses.

In Minnesota, the line of duty monthly death benefit to the spouse is 60% of the deceased firefighter's salary. Minor dependents receive a monthly death benefit of 10% of the deceased firefighter's salary. South Dakota's line of duty monthly death benefit to the spouse is 66 2/3% of the deceased firefighter's salary while the minor dependents receive a monthly allowance.

The proposed death benefit of \$25,000.00 contained within SB 2135 may just be a lifeline that I know will be appreciated beyond any of our wildest imagination.

Thank you for this opportunity. The PFFND respectfully request a Do Pass recommendation on SB 2135.

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69TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**Testimony Senate Bill 2135 Senate Industry and Business Committee January 15th, 2025**

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President, North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association**

Chairman Warrey and the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee

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Sincerely,

Ken Wangen
Fire Chief Carrington Fire Department
President North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association



\$10,000 in 2007 vs. 2024

