



Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association

Post Office Box 3945
Englewood, Colorado 80155
Phone: (720) 874-8116
Fax: (720) 862-2181

www.colofirechiefs.org

Please Oppose Senate Bill 180, Firefighter Collective Bargaining Act (Sen. Tochtrop, Rep. Casso)

Senate Bill 180 would override local control and mandate collective bargaining for firefighters. SB 180 would deprive many firefighters of the right to choose their own workplace representation, while doing little or nothing to enhance firefighter safety. SB 180 would deny local governments the ability to match their policies to local conditions; would foster conflict, not cooperation; and may adversely affect public safety and volunteerism.

SB 180 Overrides Local Control – Denying Local Governments the Ability to Match Their Policies to Local Conditions and Denying Voters Their Voice

No state law prohibits and several local governments already allow public safety employees to collectively bargain. But local decisions need to be made at the local level, especially when it comes to personnel matters and wages and benefits. In its current form, SB 180 applies to eleven local jurisdictions; and in at least three of these communities, voters have already rejected collective bargaining.

SB 180 is an Affront to Local Fire Chiefs Who Work Tirelessly to Provide for the Safety of Their Firefighters

The bill is premised on the fact that the lack of attention to safety at the local level is causing strife within jurisdictions and is affecting public safety; yet the proponents can provide no examples of where this is occurring. Most, if not all, local fire chiefs already include firefighters in decisions concerning safety equipment and safety policies and procedures. More than 400 chief officers gathered last December for the CSFCA's Annual Conference which was themed "Safeguarding Our Most Valuable Asset – Our Firefighters." Why would so many chiefs spend so much time learning how to enhance firefighter health and safety, if it wasn't something they were intrinsically concerned about?

SB 180 Fosters Conflict, Not Cooperation

Experience demonstrates that collective bargaining does not lead to increased cooperation between public safety employees and their employers. The process is inherently adversarial. Pitting employees and employers against each other at the bargaining table creates as much conflict as cooperation. SB 180 compounds this by ignoring the basic tenants of both the Colorado Labor Peace Act and the National Labor Relations Act which exclude executive and supervisory personnel from the bargaining unit. According to the bill only the chief, and the officer or officers in the rank or position immediately below the chief who reports directly to the chief, would be considered supervisors for the purpose of collective bargaining. This sets up an inherent conflict between those higher ranks and the individuals whom they supervise, command, evaluate and discipline.

SB 180 May Adversely Affect Public Safety – Volunteer Firefighters Will Get 'Burned'

More than 88% of the local jurisdictions in the state rely on volunteer firefighters to provide fire protection and related emergency services. A significant number of career firefighters, when off-duty, serve their own community as a volunteer firefighter. While the bill's language does not explicitly attack volunteers, the IAFF constitution explicitly states that a firefighter may be reprimanded, fined, removed from union office, suspended or expelled for acquiring membership in any "rival" organization, "including volunteer fire departments or associations." Across the country, many union locals have used their "exclusive" bargaining power to negotiate contract provisions that bar both union members and nonmembers from volunteering.¹

¹ For more information see: www.colofirechiefs.org/09Legislature/Volunteers_Will_Get_Burned.pdf