

Reprinted from: CCM/ccm-ct.org.

Date: May 1, 2013

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

Jim Finley, (203) 804-6895

Kevin Maloney (203) 710-3486

Robert Labanara (203) 710-0491

Workers' Compensation Benefits Give-Away

CCM calls on General Assembly to reject two costly, unjustified state mandates

Jim Finley, Executive Director and CEO of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), today (Wednesday, May 1, 2013) called on the General Assembly to reject two costly, unjustified, and ill-conceived state mandates on town and cities that will cost already hard-pressed local property taxpayers big money.

With exactly five weeks remaining in the legislative session, and major state budget items that would directly affect towns and cities still “up in the air” – **state lawmakers on the Appropriations Committee approved two unfunded workers' compensation mandates yesterday that would hurt local budgets and drain administrative resources (SB 823 and SB 925).**

“CCM is extremely disappointed that these proposed NEW mandates continue to receive support – despite the pleas from hometown Mayors and First Selectmen for mandates relief from EXISTING mandates,” said Finley.

Just six weeks ago, the M.O.R.E. Commission was resurrected and specifically charged with recommending ways to provide towns relief from unfunded and underfunded state mandates. Meanwhile, the two mandates approved in committee yesterday would force towns to cover the costs of heart attacks for firefighters while **up to 24 hours** off-duty (SB 925), and pay for benefits for employees suffering emotional distress from “witnessing” the death or maiming of another person,

regardless whether such “witnessing” resulted in a physical injury (SB 823). SB 823 also impacts private employers.

Both proposals have been clearly labeled by non-partisan capitol staff as state mandates on municipalities with significant costs. In fact, the proposed mandated coverage for off-duty heart attacks (SB 925) alone could cost hometowns up to \$1 million per claim, that’s in addition to the administrative drain it would impose on municipal legal and human resources. To make matters worse, proponents have submitted no medically conclusive justification for this new mandate.

An equally alarming consequence, beyond the negative fiscal impact, is the precedent these mandates would impose. “SB 823 and SB 925 are simply bad public policies, as they would flip the workers’ compensation system on its head by mandating ‘presumptions’ that then place the onus on municipal officials to prove that such subjective injuries as ‘mental impairment’ are not work-related,” noted Finley.

“In essence, what we are witnessing is a very methodical campaign to mandate special expanded benefits – all at local residential and business taxpayers’ expense,” stated Finley. “In these difficult budgetary times, town and city officials need their state partners to say no to special interests’ grab for more benefits. 24 hour presumption for firefighters’ heart attacks this year, 48 hours next year, 72 hours the following year...when does it end and who pays for it? Our message to state legislators: Please do no harm to municipalities and local property taxpayers. Now is not the time to enact new costly unfunded state mandates,” Finley concluded.

Both bills now head back to the State Senate.

Attachments (2)