



For immediate release
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With a MAJOR cancer presumption mandate reaching a critical stage:

CCM begins airing radio messages -- Call on state legislators to turn aside costly unfunded state mandate

With the 2015 state legislative session in its last weeks, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), the statewide association of towns and cities, today (Monday, May 18) began airing two radio spots across the state that call on state legislators to oppose enactment of the largest and most costly unfunded state mandate on towns and cities in 20 years -- HB 5871 -- which would establish a rebuttable presumption for firefighters who contract a variety of cancers – without any job correlation. The bill would impact all career and volunteer firefighters – AND EVERY TOWN HALL BUDGET -- across the state.

“We are calling on all state legislators to reject this costly new state mandate,” said Joe DeLong, CCM Executive Director. “We can’t make the same mistake that was enacted decades ago when Connecticut automatically presumed heart disease and hypertension (H&H) was job related for select groups of employees. That H&H mandate unfairly cost towns over \$20 million annually before it was rescinded.”

The proponents and firefighters are stating that there is indisputable science that links firefighting and cancer. They are claiming that the costs to towns would be minimal, with one legislator estimating a cost of \$60,000 per municipality. These low-cost estimates and claims of irrefutable science in support of a mandate are eerily reminiscent of those made in favor of the heart disease and hypertension mandate.

HB 5871 would be a huge **unfunded state mandate that would cost towns and cities millions of dollars** — in the midst of uncertain state aid to towns.

The **costs associated with the bill would compare with that of the “heart disease & hypertension” mandate**, that, although “sunsetting” in 1996, still costs towns millions per year — \$20 million per year during its heyday.

First responders are already eligible for workers’ compensation benefits for cancers and other diseases. If a firefighter is diagnosed, and a claim is filed, then awards are given based on the correlation of the job with the injury.

The science is not conclusive: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has been studying the correlation between firefighting and cancer for several years— and is still studying the matter. The CDC says that continued study will “improve our understanding of cancer risks and the fire service.” It also said, “the risk of cancer in the fire service is still poorly understood.”

Here are the complete texts of the spots:

Radio spot one:

"My old teacher says history is most important because if we don't learn from the past, we are destined to repeat our mistakes.

"I wish some state legislators had been in her class.

"Decades ago legislators passed a law linking heart disease to jobs performed by police and firefighters.

"That law was rescinded after it cost local taxpayers over \$20 million annually. In fact, property taxpayers today are still plugging the hole created by legislation that hasn't been on the books in 20 years.

"And in 2015 some legislators are at it again. This time, instead of heart disease, it's cancer that's presumed to be job related for firefighters.

"The science is uncertain, to say the least, on creating yet another unfunded mandate.

"Lawmakers may be well intended, but taxpayers cannot afford another \$20 million a year boondoggle.

"Tell your legislator to know our history and not repeat past mistakes. Vote no on HB 5871.

"Sponsored by CCM, the Voice of Property Taxpayers."

Radio spot two:

Woman: "Hard to believe there's only weeks left in the legislative session."

Man: "While state aid to towns and cities is still uncertain, lawmakers are seriously considering new unfunded mandates -- passing the buck onto property taxpayers."

Woman: "Proponents are pushing two huge mandates that would unnecessarily cost towns millions."

Man: "Why are they unnecessary?"

Woman: "One mandates special cancer benefits for firefighters. The other to all first responders for mental stress. They're unnecessary because first responders already have generous benefits and ways to receive wage replacement. Unions want presumptions that cancer is job-related, and full stress benefits for witnessing the aftermath of crimes. They could leave their jobs permanently with full wage replacement."

Man: "Would the State support municipalities for costs associated with these highly subjective claims?"

Woman: "No. Towns would be forced to pay these benefits through property tax increases costing millions."

Man: "That's one step forward, but two steps backward for taxpayers - the opposite of property tax relief."

Woman: "Call, email, text your legislators. OPPOSE HB 5871 and SB 902 as costly unfunded mandates."

Man: "Sponsored by CCM -- The Voice of Property Taxpayers."

On weekdays, from May 18 – 22, these radio spots will air during the morning and afternoon drive times on Hartford-based WTIC-AM radio (the largest news radio station in Connecticut).

The same ads are also airing this week during the morning and afternoon drive times on radio stations located around the state that are affiliated with the Connecticut Radio Network. These stations include WICC-AM in Bridgeport, WELI-AM in New Haven, WPLR-FM in Hamden, WATR-AM in Waterbury, WEBE-FM in Stamford, WDRC-AM in Hartford, WICH-AM and WMOS-FM in New London and Norwich, and WILI-AM and WMRD-AM in Windham.

