



***Substitute Senate Bill No. 1426***

***Public Act No. 25-4***

***AN ACT MAKING CHANGES TO THE FIREFIGHTERS CANCER RELIEF PROGRAM.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 7-313p of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

(a) For purposes of this section:

(1) "Firefighter" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-313g;

(2) "Compensation" has the same meaning as provided in section 31-275;

(3) "Municipal employer" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-467; [and]

(4) "Interior structural firefighter" means an individual who performs fire suppression, fire rescue, or both, either inside of buildings or in closed structures that are involved in a fire station beyond the incident stage;

(5) "State employer" means the state of Connecticut, including any agency or department of the state and any board of trustees of a state-owned or supported college or university and branches thereof; and

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(6) "Administrative law judge" has the same meaning as provided in section 31-275.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of chapter 568, a firefighter diagnosed with any condition of cancer affecting the skin, brain, skeletal system, digestive system, endocrine system, respiratory system, lymphatic system, reproductive system, urinary system or hematological system resulting in such firefighter's death or temporary or permanent total or partial disability, or such firefighter's dependents, as the case may be, shall receive (1) compensation and benefits from the account, established pursuant to section 7-313h, in the same amount and in the same manner that would be provided under chapter 568 if such death or disability was caused by [a personal injury which] an occupational disease which arose out of and in the course of such firefighter's employment and was suffered in the line of duty and within the scope of such firefighter's employment, and (2) (A) the same retirement or survivor benefits, from the municipal or state retirement system under which such firefighter is covered, or (B) the disability benefits available from the Connecticut State Firefighters Association pursuant to section 3-123, that would have been paid under such system if such death or disability was caused by [a personal injury which] an occupational disease which arose out of and in the course of such firefighter's employment and was suffered in the line of duty and within the scope of such firefighter's employment, provided such firefighter has:

(i) Submitted to a physical examination subsequent to such member's entry into service that failed to reveal any evidence of [or a propensity for] such cancer;

(ii) Has not used cigarettes, as defined in section 12-285, during the fifteen-year period prior to such diagnosis;

(iii) Was employed for at least five years in any combination as (I) an

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interior structural firefighter at a paid municipal, state or volunteer fire department, or (II) a local fire marshal, deputy fire marshal, fire investigator, fire inspector or such other class of inspectors or investigators for whom the State Fire Marshal and the Codes and Standards Committee, acting jointly, have adopted minimum standards of qualification pursuant to section 29-298; and

(iv) Has submitted to annual medical health screenings as recommended by such firefighter's medical provider.

(c) Any individual who is no longer actively serving as a firefighter but who otherwise would be eligible for compensation or benefits pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section may apply for such benefits or compensation not more than five years from the date such individual last served as a firefighter.

(d) To apply for compensation or benefits pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section, a firefighter shall provide notice to the Workers' Compensation Commission and [the municipality in which such firefighter is employed] the municipal employer or state employer of such firefighter, in the same manner as workers' compensation claims under chapter 568.

(e) (1) The [municipality in which] municipal employer or state employer that employs the firefighter [is employed] applying for compensation and benefits shall administer claims submitted pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section in the same manner as workers' compensation claims under chapter 568. Such [municipality] municipal employer or state employer shall (A) pay to the firefighter the compensation or benefits such firefighter is entitled to, and (B) submit, in a form and manner provided by the State Treasurer, an application for reimbursement from the firefighters cancer relief account. Payments for reimbursement shall be processed not later than forty-five days after such application is received.

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(2) Any costs associated with a firefighter's treatment of cancer that are not covered by such firefighter's personal or group health insurance shall be reimbursed, pursuant to this subsection, by the firefighters cancer relief account, provided such treatment complies with the provisions of section 31-294d.

(3) If the firefighters cancer relief account becomes insolvent, [a municipality shall have no obligation] no municipal employer or state employer shall be obligated to continue providing compensation and benefits pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section and subsection (c) of this section.

(f) A firefighter may request that a denial of compensation or benefits made pursuant to subsection (e) of this section be reconsidered, and an administrative law judge shall have the authority to adjudicate such claim in accordance with the provisions of section 31-278, as amended by this act, in the same manner as workers' compensation claims under chapter 568.

(g) If a physical examination was required by an employer at the time of the firefighter's employment, as a condition for such employment, or required annually for means of continued employment, a firefighter shall not be required to show proof of such examination in the maintenance of a claim under subsection (b) or (c) of this section or under such municipal or state retirement system.

(h) Any benefits provided under subsection (b) or (c) of this section shall be offset by any other benefits a firefighter or such firefighter's dependents may be entitled to receive from such firefighter's municipal employer or state employer under the provisions of chapter 568 or the municipal or state retirement system under which they are covered as a result of any condition or impairment of health caused by occupational cancer resulting in such firefighter's death or permanent total or partial disability.

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(i) The State Treasurer shall have the authority to audit reimbursements provided by the account pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

(j) No payment of compensation made under this section shall be used as evidence in support of any future claim under chapter 568.

(k) Except as provided in subsections (l) and (m) of this section, any firefighter that receives compensation under this section shall be prohibited from filing a claim under chapter 568 for a diagnosis of cancer.

(l) If the firefighters cancer relief account becomes insolvent, a firefighter that was receiving compensation under this section may file a claim under chapter 568, within one year of receiving notice from [the municipality] such firefighter's municipal employer or state employer of the firefighters cancer relief account becoming insolvent, for continuation of compensation.

(m) (1) Any [survivors] surviving dependents of a firefighter [that] who has died from cancer and was receiving compensation [under] or benefits or has applied for compensation or benefits under this section may file a claim under chapter 568 within one year of such firefighter's death. Until such claim is approved, such survivor shall continue to receive benefits from the firefighters cancer relief account.

(2) If the [survivors] surviving dependents of a firefighter [that] who has died from cancer and was receiving compensation [under] or benefits or has applied for compensation or benefits under this section do not file a claim under chapter 568 within one year of such firefighter's death, such survivors may continue to receive benefits from the firefighters cancer relief account.

Sec. 2. Section 31-278 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

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Each administrative law judge shall, for the purposes of this chapter and section 7-313p, as amended by this act, have power to summon and examine under oath such witnesses, and may direct the production of, and examine or cause to be produced or examined, such books, records, vouchers, memoranda, documents, letters, contracts or other papers in relation to any matter at issue as he may find proper, and shall have the same powers in reference thereto as are vested in magistrates taking depositions and shall have the power to order depositions pursuant to section 52-148. He shall have power to certify to official acts and shall have all powers necessary to enable him to perform the duties imposed upon him by the provisions of this chapter and section 7-313p, as amended by this act. Each administrative law judge shall hear all claims and questions arising under this chapter and section 7-313p, as amended by this act, in the district to which the administrative law judge is assigned and all such claims shall be filed in the district in which the claim arises, provided, if it is uncertain in which district a claim arises, or if a claim arises out of several injuries or occupational diseases which occurred in one or more districts, the administrative law judge to whom the first request for hearing is made shall hear and determine such claim to the same extent as if it arose solely within his own district. If an administrative law judge is disqualified or temporarily incapacitated from hearing any matter, or if the parties shall so request and the chairperson of the Workers' Compensation Commission finds that it will facilitate a speedier disposition of the claim, he shall designate some other administrative law judge to hear and decide such matter. The Superior Court, on application of an administrative law judge or the chairperson or the Attorney General, may enforce, by appropriate decree or process, any provision of this chapter, section 7-313p, as amended by this act, or any proper order of an administrative law judge or the chairperson rendered pursuant to any such provision. Any administrative law judge, after ceasing to hold office as such administrative law judge, may settle and dispose of all matters relating to appealed cases, including correcting findings and certifying records,

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as well as any other unfinished matters pertaining to causes theretofore tried by him, to the same extent as if he were still such administrative law judge.

Governor's Action:

Approved May 8, 2025