



Legislation Text

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Urging the Mayor to honor the hard work and dedication of the members of Local 22 of the International Association of Fire Fighters by implementing their recent binding arbitration award.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia fire fighters and fire paramedics put their lives on the line every day to protect the residents of our City; and

WHEREAS, These same 2,380 fire fighters and fire paramedics are represented by the Philadelphia Fire Fighters' Union, Local 22 of the International Association of Fire Fighters, and have worked without a contract since July 1, making them the only municipal union whose contract remains unresolved; and

WHEREAS, After months of negotiating and fifteen days of interest arbitration hearings, during which both the City and Local 22 had the opportunity to present testimony and evidence in support of their respective contract proposals, the Arbitration Panel issued its Interest Arbitration Award on November 1, 2000;

WHEREAS, The November 1, 2000 Award is fair to both Local 22 and the City of Philadelphia, in that it addresses the medical needs unique to fire fighters and fire paramedics; provides for testing of all fire fighters, paramedics, and retirees for Hepatitis C; requires the development of an infection control policy to address emerging illnesses such as Hepatitis C; and suspends the inherently unsafe "task force" manpower arrangements utilized by the Fire Department; and

WHEREAS, In 1992 and 1996, prior Arbitration Panels issued awards which severely restricted firefighters' medical benefits and reduced the City's contribution to the Local 22 Health & Welfare Fund, but Local 22 did not appeal those binding awards; and

WHEREAS, Since then a medical crisis has emerged, with at least 130 fire fighters having tested positive for the potentially fatal Hepatitis C virus, which is three times higher than the national average, creating severe financial problems for many fire fighters fighting for their lives; and

WHEREAS, The Administration continues to dispute that the exposure of so many courageous firefighters to this deadly disease should be categorized as "work related;" and

WHEREAS, If the Administration decides to appeal the recent binding Arbitration Award, such action would send a clear signal that they do not believe that our fire fighters should be adequately compensated for their work; that they are unwilling to address the health care needs of fire fighters, including Hepatitis C; and that they are willing to place cost savings ahead of the health and safety of Philadelphia's fire fighters and citizens; and

WHEREAS, Since Act 111 expressly prohibits appeals from interest arbitration awards and mandates that public employers implement those awards, any appeal instituted by the Administration would be without merit and would constitute an imprudent allocation of taxpayer dollars; now therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council urge the Mayor to

honor the hard work and dedication of the members of Local 22 of the International Association of Fire Fighters by implementing their recent binding arbitration award.