

The Michigan Legislature

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LAWMAKERS TO ESTABLISH BUREAU OF FIRE SERVICES

Bipartisan Package Will Strengthen Emergency Management & Homeland Security

LANSING- State lawmakers and fire fighting professionals gathered today in the Michigan capitol to announce a legislative package that would establish a new Bureau of Fire Services intended to consolidate fire fighting resources and promote more effective and efficient fire fighting techniques within the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG).

"Michigan's firefighters, fire chiefs, and other members of fire service play a vital role in protecting the health, safety, and welfare of citizens across the state," said Sen. Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming), the lead author of the bill package. "This package of bills will codify the Governor's earlier Executive Directive to consolidate resources and strengthen Michigan's emergency management and homeland security efforts."

The 25 bill package will, amongst other things, establish a Bureau of Fire Services headed by the State Fire Marshall. The legislation follows an executive directive issued last November by Governor Granholm ordering that planning begin immediately on a new agency that would be responsible for the fire service related aspects of the state's homeland security and emergency response.

"This is an important, long overdue legislative initiative," said Rep. Farhat (R-Fruitport). "With this legislation we are making it a priority to empower our first responders and support them in their efforts to protect the citizens of Michigan."

The highlights of the legislative package are as follows:

- Establishes the Bureau of Fire Services within DLEG and transfers the duties of the State Fire Marshall to the newly created office.

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- Recognizes the act creating the Arson Strike Force Unit.
- Transfers the Fire Fighting Training Council to the Bureau of Fire Services.
- Requires that local units of government apply to the Bureau of Fire Services for permits to process fireworks.
- Provides tort damage immunity to firefighting instructors

Sen. Prusi and Rep. Farhat were scheduled to be joined at today's announcement by State Senator Valde Garcia (R-Howell) and State Representatives Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor), State Fire Marshall Andy Neumann, and several firefighting professionals. Their comments on the package follow:

"The Michigan Legislature is committed to taking all appropriate steps to safeguard public safety," said Sen. Valde Garcia. "This bipartisan package is an important first step in ensuring that our state is prepared for the next emergency management crisis."

"The intent of today's action is to strengthen Michigan's emergency management and homeland security efforts," said Rep. Kolb. "By improving communication and coordination amongst our state's fire fighting services we can better protect lives and safeguard property."

"Those of us involved with the creation of the new bureau are excited about the potential improvements and enhancements to firefighting services in our state," said State Fire Marshall Andy Neumann. "Michigan's firefighters, fire chiefs, and fire service personnel will stop at nothing to safeguard the lives and property of our citizens."

"We look forward to working with the legislature on their package of bills to codify the newly created Bureau of Fire Services," said Paul Hufnagel, with the Michigan Fire Service Coalition which represents the members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union, the Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs, Michigan Fire Inspectors Society, Michigan Fire Service Instructors and the Michigan State Firemen's Association. "We are thankful of the efforts of the Granholm Administration and the legislature in making fire services a priority in Michigan."

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