

SENATE BILL 2588

By Bowling

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4;
Title 5; Title 7; Title 8 and Title 68, relative to
firefighter training.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

WHEREAS, Tennessee remains one of the jurisdictions with the highest rate of fire death nationwide; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, according to the most recent ranking by the United States Fire Administration, Tennessee was sixth in the nation with 21.7 fire deaths per million residents; and

WHEREAS, rural areas in the state are less likely to have publicly funded fire departments and consequently such departments utilize more volunteer firefighters; and

WHEREAS, the state has a large number of rural and volunteer fire departments; and

WHEREAS, a study conducted by the University of Tennessee concluded that fire deaths occur at disproportionately high rate in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, a special publication by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, an agency of the United States Department of Commerce, reported that fire deaths and injuries can be reduced through proper and increased training and readiness; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 24, is amended by adding the following language as a new part:

4-24-401.

This part shall be known and may be cited as the "Firefighter Training Act of 2014".

4-24-402.

The state fire marshal shall develop a grant program for the purpose of expanding training to volunteer and career firefighters across the state.

4-24-403.

(a) The grant program created pursuant to this part shall consist of at least ten (10) annual basic firefighting courses administered by the Tennessee fire service and codes enforcement academy.

(b)

(1) The state fire marshal's office shall accept applications from recognized fire departments or groupings of recognized fire departments that would like to host the courses.

(2) In considering any application for the grant program created pursuant to this part, the state fire marshal's office shall give additional consideration to an application submitted by the department in which one (1) or more of the following apply:

(A) A high concentration of firefighters who have not received minimum training as established in § 4-24-112;

(B) The department is located in a county that is exempt from the state's minimum firefighter training requirements;

(C) The department is located in an area with a high concentration of fire-related deaths;

(D) The fire department has a limited ability to pay for training, as certified by the highest ranking official in the fire department; or

(E) The department has a guaranteed number of firefighters who will attend the course.

(3) The state fire marshal's office shall strive to allocate the grants for firefighting courses to departments located in all areas of the state; provided that, the state fire marshal's office may concentrate on areas in the state with the most need.

4-24-404.

(a) The grant application shall include the location for the requested course, a minimum number of firefighters who will attend, and a certified statement from the highest ranking official of the fire department verifying that the fire department is a recognized fire department under § 68-102-302.

(b) If a fire department receives a grant for the course and is unable to meet the minimum personnel guaranteed by the department in the application, the fire department shall be responsible for the share of expenses related to the number of personnel below the minimum guaranteed number provided in the application.

(c) Any fire department located within a county that is exempted from the minimum firefighter training requirements and that submits an application under the grant program, shall be required to submit a letter from the fire chief stating that the department intends to fully comply with the state's minimum firefighter training requirements in order to be eligible to receive the grant.

4-24-405.

Any firefighter who is in good standing with a fire department and successfully completes one (1) of the ten (10) basic firefighting courses offered through this grant across the state shall be eligible to attend the state fire academy's live burn course within six (6) months of completion of such basic

course at no cost, including the cost of training, lodging, and meals; provided, however, the state fire marshal's office may charge a deposit for registration.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.