



SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA BILL SUMMARY

Amendment 03296 to SB 908

Prime Sponsor: Regan

Committee: Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness

SYNOPSIS:

A 03296 would amend the Volunteer Loan Assistance Program by changing the name to the "Emergency Services Loan Fund;" allowing career Fire Companies to be eligible for low-interest loans; asking voters to approve this change; and increasing the loan amounts for the program, with an annual increase based on inflation.

SUMMARY:

A#### would make the following changes the Volunteer Loan Assistance Program (VLAP):

*Section 7361 (Scope of Chapter) - Adds Career Fire Companies and changes "ambulance service and rescue squad assistance" to "emergency medical services."

*Section 7362 (Legislative findings and declaration of purpose) - Deletes unnecessary language under Findings and ensure that both career and volunteer fire companies and EMS are eligible for loans.

*Section 7363 (Definitions) - Adds the following definitions: "Emergency Medical Services Company," "Fire Company" (to include both career and volunteer), "Fund," and "Municipality."

*Section 7364 (Assistance to volunteer fire companies, ambulance service and rescue squads) - Changes to "Assistance to Fire Companies and Emergency Medical Services" and changes the following loan amounts:

- Facilities – increased from \$400,000 to \$500,000
- Vehicles – increased from \$200,000 to \$300,000
- Aerial Apparatus – increased from \$300,000 to \$400,000
- Ambulance or Light Duty Rescue Vehicle – increased from \$100,000 to \$200,000
- Water Rescue Vehicle – increased from \$30,000 to \$40,000
- Protective Equipment – increased from \$20,000 to \$25,000
- Repair or Rehabilitation of Apparatus Equipment – the range (\$2,000-\$70,000) was increased to \$2,500-\$75,000
- Purchase of Used Fire Apparatus – increased from \$120,000 to \$150,000
- Purchase of PENNFIRS Hardware – eliminated
- Minimum Loan increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000

The following Loan Time Periods were changed:

- 10-Year Loans for anything less than \$30,000 is changed to less than \$50,000
- 15-Year Loans for anything \$30,000-\$100,000 changed to \$50,000-\$500,000
- 20-Year Loans for anything above \$200,000 changed to anything above \$500,000

Provides for an annual inflationary index for the loan amounts.

Forms an Application Review Committee, with the Fire Commissioner (or designee) to chair the Committee along with the following members:

- Chairs and Minority Chairs of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee (or designees);
- Director of the Bureau of Emergency Services in the Department of Health (or designee)
- Representative of the PA Fire & Emergency Services Institute;
- Representative of the Firemans' Association of Pennsylvania;
- Representative of the Ambulance Association of Pennsylvania;
- Representative of the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council;

The Committee shall regularly meet at least quarterly and to review applications and make recommendations to the Office.

*Section 7365 (Volunteer Companies Loan Fund) - Name changed to "Emergency Services Loan Fund." Stipulates that money from the Fund shall not be transferred for General Fund use by the Commonwealth.

*Section 7378.1.a (Referendum to expand loan assistance) – Places a question on the ballot at the next Primary, General or Municipal Election after the November 5, 2019, General Election, asking voters whether they approve of career fire companies being eligible for loans.

*Section 7378.1b (Report and outreach) Adds a requirement that the Fire Commissioner issue an Annual Report disseminated to the Chairs and Minority Chairs of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committees. Also requires the Fire Commissioner to provide notice to all fire companies and EMS.

Effective Date: 60 Days.

HISTORY:

SB 785 and HB 1448 would amend VLAP by allowing career Fire Companies to be eligible for low-interest loans. SB 796 and HB 1816 would amend VLAP by increasing loan amounts across the board by 10 percent.

Prepared by: Silcox 10/21/2019