

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 520

(Calvert County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Calvert County - Length of Service Award Program - Burial Benefits and Rescue Dive Team

This bill provides length of service award program (LOSAP) benefits for years served as a member of a rescue dive team in Calvert County that are comparable to benefits now provided for years of service as a member of a volunteer fire company or volunteer rescue squad. The bill increases the maximum burial benefit for a qualified volunteer who has completed 25 years of certified service, from \$3,000 to \$6,000, and increases the maximum burial benefit for active service volunteers who reach age 70 but have completed less than 25 years of certified service, from \$120 to \$240 for each year of certified service. The bill also makes a technical change regarding the latter burial benefit.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Calvert County expenditures will increase by an estimated \$3,000 annually. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Individuals who have served as members of any Calvert County volunteer fire company or volunteer rescue squad (or both) are entitled to specified LOSAP benefits for active years served. Active service for a given year is determined by a point system that variably credits volunteers for specified activity. Points must be

earned in at least four of the following seven categories: approved training courses; company or county drills; official meeting attendance; responses to calls to duty; completion of a one-year term of office in any of the county's fire or rescue service organizations; hours of collateral duty (*e.g.*, fundraising or CPR instruction); and military service.

An individual must accumulate 60 points per calendar year to qualify as an active volunteer member in that year. A volunteer member prohibited from participation of duties because of a pending workers' compensation claim receives 6 points for each month that the claim is pending, up to a maximum of 60 points per calendar year. No member with less than 10 years service may earn points unless he or she is a certified emergency medical technician or firefighter I.

Those who reach the age of 55 and have completed a minimum of 25 years of certified active volunteer service receive \$400 per month, for life, beginning on the first day of the first month following eligibility. For each full year of service, an additional \$4 per month is received, up to a maximum of \$500 total payment per month. An active volunteer fireman or squad member (defined as an individual who has at least two years of qualifying service in the five preceding years) who reaches the age of 70 but does not achieve the required 25 years of service, is entitled to a monthly benefit of the number of years of certified service completed, multiplied by \$8.

If a qualified volunteer dies while receiving benefits (or following 25 years of certified active service but prior to receiving benefits), his or her surviving spouse is entitled to benefits equal to half of the volunteer's benefits. This benefit terminates upon the death or remarriage of the spouse. When a qualified volunteer who has completed 25 years of certified service dies, a burial benefit up to \$3,000 is payable. When a volunteer who is receiving benefits by virtue of reaching the age of 70 dies, a burial benefit of up to \$120 for each year of certified service is payable.

If an active volunteer becomes disabled while performing his or her rescue squad or volunteer fireman service; if the disability prevents the volunteer from pursuing his or her normal occupation; and if the disability is certified as permanent in nature, the volunteer is entitled to benefits as described above, regardless of age or length of service, or any other benefits the volunteer may be entitled to receive. The volunteer receives payments beginning on the first day of the first month following establishment of the permanency of the disability.

Background: Calvert County advises that there are now 12 individuals serving as rescue dive team members in the county. Members of the Calvert County Dive special service unit perform marine rescue and marine search and recovery operations. The unit works under the direction of the Calvert County Fire and Rescue Association. The county

advises that in calendar 2008, 770 volunteer members were enrolled in the LOSAP program.

Local Expenditures: Calvert County advises that the burial benefit is currently paid approximately once per year. Therefore, the county's expenditures are estimated to increase by \$3,000 annually. The addition of dive team members to the LOSAP program is not expected to cause a significant fiscal effect; these individuals will constitute a small portion of overall program enrollment and they will begin to earn years of service credits after October 1, 2009.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Calvert County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 3, 2009
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