

Oppose HB 278 and SB 179 Parity for First Responders

Legislation filed in the House and Senate is asking that you create a new retirement benefit for one class of local government employee – firefighters. While municipalities support their firefighters in a variety of ways, including funding one of the best pension systems in the country, here are some facts that you may not know about the “firefighters separation allowance” proposed by **HB 278 and SB 179 Parity for First Responders**:

- It’s an unfunded mandate. There is no funding mechanism in the bill, meaning cities and towns and their taxpayers would face this significant financial burden with no funding source.
- It’s a benefit in addition to the pension benefits that firefighters and rescue squad workers receive under the Local Government Employees Retirement system (LGERS).
- The General Assembly staff estimates the present value of the cost to provide this benefit to current eligible local government employees at roughly \$300 million. The yearly cost would quickly reach \$9 million a year, and then continue to grow.
- Cities and towns already have the authority in law to offer this benefit if they so choose. Coming to the General Assembly with this request is an end-run around their existing authority.

Cities and towns are being asked to fund this additional retirement benefit at a time when the costs of funding current pension benefits are rising substantially as investment gains are not keeping pace with retiree needs. **North Carolina cities and towns want to be fair to all of their employees, and maintain a system to provide adequate retirement benefits to them all. Please help them to do this and oppose HB 278 and SB 179.**

