

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 4144
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Finance
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Firefighters and peace officers often face dangerous working conditions that expose them to heightened risks of serious medical conditions, including cancer, heart attacks, and strokes. Texas law currently provides a presumption that certain diseases contracted by these first responders are work-related, enabling them to access benefits while actively employed. However, this protection does not extend adequately into retirement—even though the health consequences of their service may not manifest until after they have left the job.

H.B. 4144 addresses this gap by ensuring that first responders who are diagnosed with a serious illness within three years of retirement are eligible for critical-illness supplemental benefits. The bill requires governmental entities to provide either a lump sum or short-term income benefit—capped at \$100,000 or the retiree's final annual salary—for qualifying conditions presumed to be work-related. Additionally, the bill allows entities to be exempt if they continue to provide a health plan comparable in coverage and cost to that offered during employment.

By linking financial support to occupational illness, H.B. 4144 affirms Texas' long-standing commitment to those who dedicate their lives to public safety. The legislation ensures that retired first responders are not left vulnerable to the delayed impacts of service-related health risks and provides them with essential support at a time of great medical and financial need.

H.B. 4144 amends current law relating to supplemental benefits for retired firefighters and peace officers diagnosed with certain diseases or illnesses.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of workers' compensation in SECTION 1 (Section 607.152, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 607, Government Code, by adding Subchapter D, as follows:

**SUBCHAPTER D. BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN DISEASES OR ILLNESSES SUFFERED BY
RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS AND PEACE OFFICERS**

Sec. 607.151. DEFINITIONS. Defines "consumer price index," "firefighter," "governmental entity," and "peace officer."

Sec. 607.152. BENEFITS FOR CANCER, ACUTE MYOCARDIAL INFARCTION, OR STROKE. Requires a governmental entity, except as provided by Subsection (e), to provide to a firefighter or peace officer who retires from the entity a critical-illness supplemental income benefit or comparable health benefit plan coverage in accordance with this section if the firefighter or peace officer is diagnosed with a disease described by Section 607.055 (Cancer) or 607.056 (Acute Myocardial Infarction or Stroke) not later than the third anniversary of the date the firefighter or peace officer retires.

(b) Provides that the value of the supplemental income benefit provided under Subsection (a) is the lesser of:

(1) the firefighter's or peace officer's final yearly salary; or

(2) \$100,000.

(c) Authorizes a governmental entity providing a supplemental income benefit under Subsection (a) to provide the benefit in a lump sum payment or equal payments over three consecutive months.

(d) Requires the commissioner of workers' compensation, not later than September 1 of each year ending in a five, by rule to adjust the amount described by Subsection (b)(2) by an amount equal to the percentage increase, if any, in the consumer price index for the preceding 10 years.

(e) Provides that this section does not apply to a governmental entity that provides to a firefighter or peace officer who retires from the entity a health benefit plan that is comparable in coverage and cost to the retiree as the health benefit plan the entity provided to the retiree on the day before the date the retiree retired.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective to January 1, 2026.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2025.