

1 _____ BILL NO. _____

2 INTRODUCED BY _____

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROTECTING VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICE
5 PROVIDERS FROM TERMINATION BY A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE EMPLOYER UNDER CERTAIN
6 CONDITIONS; AND PROVIDING FOR A LEGAL CAUSE OF ACTION FOR WRONGFUL TERMINATION."

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8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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10 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Termination of volunteer emergency services provider prohibited --**

11 **conditions -- definition.** (1) An agency may not terminate the employment of an employee because the
12 employee has elected to serve as a volunteer emergency services provider or joined a volunteer emergency
13 unit or organization, including but not limited to a municipal, rural, or subscription fire department.

14 (2) An employee who serves as a volunteer emergency services provider before [the effective date
15 of this section] shall provide the agency with a written notification of the service within 30 days of [the effective
16 date of this section]. An employee who joins a volunteer emergency unit or organization after [the effective date
17 of this section] shall provide the agency with written notification within 30 days of joining the unit or
18 organization. Before accepting an offer of employment, an employee shall provide the agency with written
19 notification that the employee is a volunteer emergency services provider.

20 (3) (a) After written notification is provided, the agency may not terminate the employment of a
21 volunteer emergency services provider if the employee is absent or late to work and the provisions in this
22 subsection (3) are fulfilled.

23 (b) An employee who is a volunteer emergency services provider and is absent from or late to
24 work while performing volunteer emergency service duties shall notify the agency as soon as possible that the
25 employee may be absent or late because of volunteer emergency service.

26 (c) An agency may request that an employee who is a volunteer emergency service provider and
27 is absent from or late to work provide a written statement from a supervisor of the volunteer emergency service
28 organization that the employee responded to an emergency and provide the date and the time of the

1 emergency.

2 (d) An employee may not claim regular pay for the time that the employee is absent from or late to
3 work while performing volunteer emergency service duties. If the pay was claimed, the agency may deduct that
4 amount of regular pay for the time the employee was not present at work.

5 (4) An agency shall determine whether an employee may leave work to respond to an emergency
6 as a part of the employee's volunteer emergency service.

7 (5) An employee whose employment is terminated in violation of this section may bring a civil
8 action against the agency. The employee may seek reinstatement to the employee's former position, payment
9 of back wages, reinstatement of fringe benefits, and, in situations in which seniority rights are granted,
10 reinstatement of seniority rights. If the employee prevails in a civil action, the employee is entitled to an award
11 of reasonable attorney fees and costs of the action. An employee must commence an action within 1 year after
12 the date of termination of employment.

13 (6) For the purposes of this section, "volunteer emergency services provider" means a volunteer
14 firefighter as defined in 7-33-4510, a volunteer who is an enrolled member of a volunteer fire department
15 established under 7-33-4109, or a volunteer emergency medical technician as defined in 50-6-202, and who is
16 not paid full-time by the entity for which the services are performed in the local service area, in a mutual aid
17 agreement area, or in a state of disaster or emergency declared by the governor.

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19 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Termination of volunteer emergency services provider prohibited --**
20 **conditions -- definition.** (1) An employer may not terminate the employment of an employee because the
21 employee has elected to serve as a volunteer emergency services provider or joined a volunteer emergency
22 unit or organization, including but not limited to a municipal, rural, or subscription fire department.

23 (2) An employee who serves as a volunteer emergency services provider before [the effective date
24 of this section] shall provide the employer with a written notification of the service within 30 days of [the
25 effective date of this section]. An employee who joins a volunteer emergency unit or organization after [the
26 effective date of this section] shall provide the employer with written notification within 30 days of joining the unit
27 or organization. Before accepting an offer of employment, an employee shall provide the employer with written
28 notification that the employee is a volunteer emergency services provider.

(3) (a) After written notification is provided, the employer may not terminate the employment of a volunteer emergency services provider if the employee is absent or late to work and the provisions in this subsection (3) are fulfilled.

(b) An employee who is a volunteer emergency services provider and is absent from or late to work while performing volunteer emergency service duties shall notify the employer as soon as possible that the employee may be absent or late because of volunteer emergency service.

(c) An employer may request that an employee who is a volunteer emergency service provider and is absent from or late to work provide a written statement from a supervisor of the volunteer emergency service organization that the employee responded to an emergency and provide the date and the time of the emergency.

(d) An employee may not claim regular pay for the time that the employee is absent from or late to work while performing volunteer emergency service duties. If the pay was claimed, the employer may deduct that amount of regular pay for the time the employee was not present at work.

(4) An employer shall determine whether an employee may leave work to respond to an emergency as a part of the employee's volunteer emergency service.

(5) An employee whose employment is terminated in violation of this section may bring a civil action against the employer. The employee may seek reinstatement to the employee's former position, payment of back wages, reinstatement of fringe benefits, and, in situations in which seniority rights are granted, reinstatement of seniority rights. If the employee prevails in a civil action, the employee is entitled to an award of reasonable attorney fees and costs of the action. An employee must commence an action within 1 year after the date of termination of employment.

(6) For the purposes of this section, "volunteer emergency services provider" means a volunteer firefighter as defined in 7-33-4510, a volunteer who is an enrolled member of a volunteer fire department established under 7-33-4109, or a volunteer emergency medical technician as defined in 50-6-202, and who is not paid full-time by the entity for which the services are performed in the local service area, in a mutual aid agreement area, or in a state of disaster or emergency declared by the governor.

NEW SECTION. Section 3. Codification instruction. (1) [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an

1 integral part of Title 2, chapter 18, part 6, and the provisions of Title 2, chapter 18, part 6, apply to [section 1].

2 (2) [Section 2] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 39, chapter 2, part 3, and the

3 provisions of Title 39, chapter 2, part 3, apply to [section 2].

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