



# ISSUE BRIEF

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## **House Bill 170, as amended:** Firefighter Participation in SLEP

**IMRF Position:**  
**OPPOSE**

**Sponsor(s):**  
**Representative Walsh**

## Proposed Change in the Law

The bill would allow firefighters that participate in IMRF with employers that meet specific criteria to participate in IMRF SLEP. It would also create an occupational disease disability pension program for firefighters and paramedics who participate in IMRF.

## Reasons for Position

The portion of the proposal regarding firefighter participation is similar to legislation from 2017 that applied to the Village of Bedford Park. There were two main differences between that legislation and this proposal: the Bedford Park Village Board was required to adopt a resolution permitting the switch to IMRF SLEP and there was no alternative disability program created by that bill.

Firefighters who work for IMRF-participating employers that meet the following criteria would be placed in to SLEP:

1. Have at least 40 full-time firefighters;
2. Have a population of less than 5,000;
3. Not participate in an Article 4 fund;
4. Be located in a county with a population of greater than 1 million (i.e., Cook County).

Members who have participated in IMRF as a firefighter prior to 1/1/2011 would remain in Tier 1 in the SLEP plan. It is unclear if this includes only time as a firefighter at that employer or if IMRF participation as a firefighter with any employer would count.

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Gwen Henry – President  
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Louis Kosiba  
Tom Kuehne  
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IMRF currently has no equivalent to an occupational disease disability pension. This would require an entirely new structure to our disability program and would be virtually impossible to have it set up and ready to implement immediately upon signature by the governor. The language for this new program is taken from the current program for the Article 4 (downstate fire) pension systems. The language is not aligned with the terminology found in the IMRF Article, however, and would need to be amended to address concerns specific to IMRF, especially regarding Social Security coordination.

Disability benefits are currently pooled amongst all employers. It is likely, therefore, that this additional benefit would increase costs for all employers, even though very few would have members eligible to participate in the program. It would also increase IMRF's administrative costs since additional staff and programming would be required to create and administer this new program.

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