

Department of Planning and Budget 2001 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. **Bill Number** HB2405

House of Origin	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduced	<input type="checkbox"/> Substitute	<input type="checkbox"/> Engrossed
Second House	<input type="checkbox"/> In Committee	<input type="checkbox"/> Substitute	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enrolled

2. **Patron** Kilgore

3. **Committee** Passed Both Houses

4. **Title** Benefits for special forest wardens

5. **Summary/Purpose:** This bill would include special forest wardens in the definition of firefighters as used in other portions of the *Code of Virginia* for purposes of workers' compensation for off-duty incidents, and for presumptions of death or disability due to respiratory disease, hypertension, heart disease, or certain cancers. In addition, the children and spouses of these wardens who have been killed in the line of duty are entitled to a waiver of tuition and fees at Virginia institutions of higher education.

6. **Fiscal Impact Estimates are not available:** See Item 8.

7. **Budget amendment necessary:** No.

8. **Fiscal implications:** Benefits at the Department of Forestry would be extended to 212 special forest wardens. There is an unknown future liability based on the number of workers' compensation claims that could be filed by these employees. However, in the past five years, there have been 47 injury reports filed with a total of 42 days missed for fire related incidents. To date, there have been no incidents of employees killed while in the line of duty. Chapters 597 and 602 of the 1999 Acts of Assembly extended workers' compensation benefits for work-related death or disability from hypertension or heart disease to marine patrol officers and game wardens. The Department of the Treasury's Division of Risk Management estimated an annual increase in insurance premiums of \$100,000 for the 88 marine patrol officers, and \$200,000 for the 192 game wardens. However, rather than collect premiums at the beginning of the year, the decision was made to charge agencies in the following year based on actual expenditures in the current year. Eligibility for benefits for marine patrol officers and game wardens began on July 1, 1999, and no history for claims is yet available. If there are incidents, there will be a general and nongeneral fund budget impact in future years. At this time, any fiscal impact cannot be measured.

9. **Specific agency or political subdivisions affected:** Department of Forestry and the Department of the Treasury.

10. **Technical amendment necessary:** No.

11. Other comments: This bill would also entitle the beneficiary of a firefighter whose death occurred while in the line of duty to the following benefits that are not directly stated in the bill:

- A payment in the amount of \$75,000 from the general fund of the state treasury;
- A payment in the amount of \$25,000 if the death arose out of a condition or impairment of health caused by respiratory diseases, hypertension, or heart disease suffered in the line of duty or was within five years from his date of retirement; and
- Continued health insurance coverage payable from the general fund of the state treasury if the deceased's death occurred while in the line of duty as the direct or proximate result of the performance of his duty. Health insurance is also provided if the death arose out of a condition or impairment of health caused by respiratory diseases, hypertension, or heart disease suffered in the line of duty. Chapter 616 of the 2000 Acts of Assembly added provisions for continued health insurance for disabilities that occurred while in the line of duty. The cost of continued health coverage is paid from the general fund.

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cc: Secretary of Commerce and Trade

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