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HOUSE BILL NO. 854

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 12, 2016

A BILL to amend and reenact § 9.1-301 of the Code of Virginia, relating to firefighter or emergency medical services personnel interrogation; observer.

Patron—Hugo

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 9.1-301 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 9.1-301. Conduct of interrogation.**

The provisions of this section shall apply whenever a firefighter or emergency medical services personnel are subjected to an interrogation that could lead to dismissal, demotion, or suspension for punitive reasons:

1. The interrogation shall take place at the facility where the investigating officer is assigned, or at the facility that has jurisdiction over the place where the incident under investigation allegedly occurred, as designated by the investigating officer.

2. No firefighter or emergency medical services personnel shall be subjected to interrogation without first receiving written notice of sufficient detail of the investigation in order to reasonably apprise the firefighter or emergency medical services personnel of the nature of the investigation.

3. All interrogations shall be conducted at a reasonable time of day, preferably when the firefighter or individual who meets the definition of "emergency medical services personnel" in § 32.1-111.1 is on duty, unless the matters being investigated are of such a nature that immediate action is required.

4. The firefighter or emergency medical services personnel under investigation shall be informed of the name, rank, and unit or command of the officer in charge of the investigation, the interrogators, and all persons present during any interrogation.

5. Interrogation sessions shall be of reasonable duration, and the firefighter or emergency medical services personnel shall be permitted reasonable periods for rest and personal necessities. The firefighter or emergency medical services personnel may have an observer of his choice present during the interrogation, as long as the interview is not unduly delayed. This observer may not participate or represent the employee, may not be involved in the investigation, and must be a ~~current~~ *an active or retired* member of the ~~Department~~ *department*, for purposes of confidentiality.

6. The firefighter or emergency medical services personnel being interrogated shall not be subjected to offensive language or offered any incentive as an inducement to answer any questions.

7. If a recording of any interrogation is made, and if a transcript of the interrogation is made, the firefighter or emergency medical services personnel under investigation shall be entitled to a copy without charge. Such record may be electronically recorded.

8. No firefighter or emergency medical services personnel shall be discharged, disciplined, demoted, denied promotion or seniority, or otherwise disciplined or discriminated against in regard to his employment, or be threatened with any such treatment as retaliation for his exercise of any of the rights granted or protected by this chapter.

Nothing contained in this section shall prohibit a local governing body from granting its employees rights greater than those contained herein.

INTRODUCED

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