

# *Professional Fire Fighters of Idaho*

## **Legislative History**

### **General Overview**

The lobbying effort of the PFFI is one of the most important activities that this organization engages in. How we work, how we are compensated, and the benefits we receive are directly and indirectly decided in the Idaho State Legislature. As such, where we are today is a result of our history of engaging the State Legislature and fighting for those issues that are important to us.

The two primary issues that we work to protect and enhance are collective bargaining and our retirement system. Retirement benefits for firefighters date back to the 1940's and collective bargaining was passed in 1970. Over the years much work has been done to ensure that we maintained these benefits and have even enhanced our retirement. Other issues that the PFFI lobbyists have worked on include Line-of-Duty Death (LODD) benefits, workers compensation issues, health and safety issues, minimum medical standards and labor issues.

The gains we have made on these fronts have come about because of the dedication of those who came before us and worked diligently on our behalf. We owe it to them, to ourselves, and to the future firefighters to continue this important work – to prevent losing what we've gained and to gain more ground.

### **Timeline**

**1940's** – Firefighter retirement fund (FRF) is created.

**1960's** – Idaho State Council of Firefighters is created by Local 672 member Jim Martinez.

**1969** – Jim Martinez introduces collective bargaining at the Idaho State Legislature.

**1970** – Sponsored by then-Senator and future-Governor Cecil Andrus, the firefighter's collective bargaining bill is enacted.

**1976** – Heart disease is added to the list of occupational diseases in the workers compensation statute.

**1978 – 80** – Under dubious claims that the FRF fund was going bankrupt, legislation is passed that caps the number of members in FRF to those who are currently enrolled, and names PERSI as the retirement system for all new firefighters.

**1980** – Idaho State Council of Firefighters and the Idaho Firemen's Pension Association merge to create the Professional Firefighters of Idaho.



**1981** – PFFI unsuccessfully attempts to amend the collective bargaining law to include binding fact-finding.

**1981** – The PFFI is unsuccessful in stopping a bill that would cap FRF COLA's at 3% (instead of the statewide average firefighter salary), but successfully defeat it in the Supreme Court.

**1983** – The PFFI unsuccessfully attempts to pass a law called the “Right to Know” Act which would allow firefighters to be made aware of the storage of hazardous materials at certain sites.

**1986** – The PFFI joins with the Idaho Education Association, the State Employees Association, and several other groups to form the Public Employees Retirement Coalition (PERC), a group which has worked over the years to protect and enhance PERSI benefits.

**1988** – The “78-80” bill is passed which corrected language in the FRF statute which corrected a loophole in which firefighters hired between a 1978 and 1980 were not receiving the same benefits as other firefighters hired before this time frame.

**1989** – Infectious disease is added to the list of occupational diseases in the workers compensation statute. The significance of this is still debatable as the law has never been tested in court.

**1992 through 1994** – The PFFI helps pass a series of bills that incrementally increase firefighter benefits over the course of several years. This 5 step plan takes the PERSI multiplier from 2% per year to 2.3% per year and decreases the base period from 5 years to 42 months. The bills required approval for each step over the course of five years and all but one of the steps was successfully passed. The last step to reduce the base period to 36 months has never succeeded.

**1993** – PFFI successfully fends off an attack to repeal collective bargaining.

**1993** – Survivor benefits (scholarship - college tuition for state colleges) are passed.

**1994** - Casual seasonal worker bill deals with hiring someone for nine months and not paying benefits.

**1994** - Mental disability shot down.

**1995** – PFFI successfully fends off an attack to repeal collective bargaining.

**1996** – \$100,000 state Line-of-duty-death benefit passed.

**2001** – The PFFI unsuccessfully fights the “Voluntary Contribution Act” which would prevent the collection of PAC dues by payroll deduction. The PFFI takes the battle to court and successfully overturns the law in 2007.

**2001** – The PFFI unsuccessfully attempts to pass presumptive illness for infectious disease. The bill is sponsored by PFFI member and State Representative Edgar Martinez.

**2002** – Two-in, two-out legislation is passed.



## **Lobbyists**

**1967 -1976:** Jim Martinez

**1976 -1990:** Bob Chase

**1982 -1999:** Rich Randolph

**1982 – 1985:** Steve Hamilton

**1981 -1995:** Lynn Nokes

**1992 -1997:** Mitch Caldwell

**1997 -2004:** Dennis Doan

**1999 – 2006:** Karl Mallot

**2007 - present:** Mike Walker

