

Disability Benefit Subcommittee Meeting
October 1, 1981
Room 81, State Office Building
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Frank Rodriguez called the meeting to order.

PRESENT: Senators Spear, Renneke and Frederickson
Representatives Rodriguez and Sarna

The chairman welcomed the various representatives of the relief associations and of the municipalities present at the meeting. He indicated that the Subcommittee was especially anxious to hear the views of the municipalities on the matters before the Subcommittee.

Stan Peskar, representing the League of Minnesota Cities, gave a general view of the League's position on the matters before the Subcommittee. He stated that individual municipalities had sent representatives to the meeting to give more specific information relating to their municipality. Mr. Peskar, in his general remarks addressed the following matters: need for a more uniform definition of disability; need for offsets for workers compensation benefits and subsequent employment income against the amount of the disability income; need for concept of partial disability; alternative duty assignments; pre-employment screening problems; use of insurance benefits as an alternative to relief association disability benefits; and improvement of certain disability benefit amounts that are below average.

Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: incentives to encourage alternative duty; cost savings resulting from alternative duty employment; affirmative action problems; uniform disability benefit amounts; pre-employment screening; retraining for alternative duty; and alternative duty outside the public safety department.

Thomas Weyant, assistant city attorney for Saint Paul, spoke concerning the city of Saint Paul's experience with workers compensation and other disability related topics. Mr. Weyant addressed the following areas: continued employment following injury; budget constraints; stacking of disability benefits and other injury related benefits such as workers compensation; pre-employment screening; doctor shopping; problems with civil service rules, etc., for those reemployed after injury; need for workers compensation type rehabilitation program for disabled police and firefighters; and need to retrain quickly after injury.

Darrell Johnson, Winona finance director, spoke concerning his views on the following topics: increased costs of current police and firefighters relief associations; cost of alternative employment plans; and possible misuse of disability benefits.

Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: possible abuse of disability benefit program; alternative duty employment possibilities in Winona area; and reemployment of the disabled.

Leo Hummel, Austin firefighters, spoke on the following issues: different associations pay different benefits and have different procedures; alternative duty positions should be filled only by persons qualified and trained to fill the positions; and problem when disabled public safety personnel receives more income when on disability than when on active duty.

Merle Steward, Rochester firefighters, stated that disabled persons should not be placed in fire inspector positions unless they are tested and able to do the job.

Dick Feider, Saint Paul police, described in-depth how his association processes disability claims and commented on the following additional topics: different bookkeeping procedures make the Minneapolis percentages of disabled persons look higher than the Saint Paul figures; input by city officials into pension board; efforts of city to put people back to work; difference in duty-related and non-duty disability benefits; and court-ordered disability benefits for mental disability.

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Questions from the Subcommittee addressed these additional topics: medical personnel on the disability board; requirement of two or more physicians' opinions; repeat applications for disability benefits; board makes decision concerning disability award; court appeals by those denied disability benefit; and differences between workers compensation and system used in Saint Paul.

Karen Dudley then went over the staff memo summarizing the responses from the local police and firefighters relief association concerning the number of members who received more income while on disability due to the receipt of both workers compensation payments and the relief association disability benefits. The responses indicated that few disabled members received the maximum workers compensation benefit, and that generally, only those in the lower ranks who received the maximum workers compensation in addition to the disability benefit would bring home more income while disabled than while they were on active duty.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.

Karen Dudley
Assistant

Rep. Leo Reding
Commission Secretary