

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on General and Housing to which was referred House Bill  
3 No. 57 entitled “An act relating to survivor benefits for law enforcement  
4 officers” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends  
5 that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and  
6 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

8 This act may be cited as “Jessica’s Law.”

9 Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. chapter 181 is amended to read:

10 CHAPTER 181. BENEFITS FOR THE SURVIVORS OF EMERGENCY

11 PERSONNEL

12 § 3171. DEFINITIONS

13 As used in this chapter:

14 (1) “Board” means the Emergency Personnel Survivors Benefit Review  
15 Board.

16 (2) “Child” means ~~a natural or legally adopted child~~, regardless of age,  
17 the deceased’s biological child, foster child, adoptive child, or stepchild; a  
18 child for whom the deceased is listed as a parent on the child’s birth certificate;  
19 a legal ward of the deceased; a child of the deceased’s spouse; or a child for  
20 whom the deceased had day-to-day responsibilities to care and financially  
21 support at the time of death or when the child was under 18 years of age.

1           (3) “Correctional officer” has the same meaning as in 28 V.S.A. § 3.

2           (4) “Domestic partner” means an individual with whom the deceased  
3 had an enduring domestic relationship of a spousal nature at the time of death,  
4 provided that at the time of death the deceased and the domestic partner:

5                   (A) had shared a residence for at least six consecutive months;

6                   (B) were at least 18 years of age;

7                   (C) were not married to or considered a domestic partner of another  
8 individual;

9                   (D) were not related by blood closer than would bar marriage under  
10 State law; and

11                   (E) had agreed between themselves to be responsible for each other’s  
12 welfare.

13           (5) “Firefighter” has the same meaning as in subdivision 3151(3) of this  
14 title.

15           (6) “Emergency medical personnel” has the same meaning as in 24  
16 V.S.A. § 2651.

17           (7) “Emergency personnel” means:

18                   (A) ~~firefighters as defined in subdivision 3151(3) of this title; and~~

19                   (B) ~~emergency medical personnel and volunteer personnel as defined~~  
20 ~~in 24 V.S.A. § 2651;~~

21                   (C) law enforcement officers; and

1            (D) correctional officers.

2            (8) “Law enforcement officer” means a law enforcement officer who  
3            has been certified by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council pursuant to section  
4            2358 of this title.

5            ~~(4)~~(9) “Line of duty” means:

6            ~~(A) answering or returning from~~ With respect to firefighters,  
7            emergency medical personnel, and volunteer personnel:

8            (i) service in answer to a call of the department or service for a  
9            fire or emergency ~~or training drill, including going to and returning from a fire~~  
10           or emergency or participating in a fire or emergency training drill; or

11           ~~(B)~~(ii) similar service in another town or district to which the  
12           department or service has been called for firefighting or emergency purposes.

13           (B) With respect to law enforcement officers:

14           (i) service as a law enforcement officer in answer to a complaint  
15           lodged with the department or in response to a disorder, including going to,  
16           returning from, and investigating or responding to the complaint or disorder; or

17           (ii) service under orders from the department or in any emergency  
18           for which the law enforcement officer serves as a law enforcement officer.

19           (C) With respect to correctional officers:

20           (i) supervision or monitoring of inmates in a correctional facility;

1                   (ii) supervision or monitoring of one or more persons serving a  
2 sentence of incarceration outside a correctional facility; or

3                   (iii) supervision or monitoring of a person on parole or probation.

4           (5)(10) “Occupation-related illness” means a disease that directly arises  
5 out of, and in the course of, service, including a heart injury or disease  
6 symptomatic within 72 hours from the date of last service in the line of duty,  
7 which shall be presumed to be incurred in the line of duty.

8           (6)(11) “Parent” means ~~a natural or adoptive parent~~ the deceased’s  
9 biological parent, foster parent, adoptive parent, or stepparent; an individual  
10 who is listed as a parent on the deceased’s birth certificate; a legal guardian of  
11 the deceased; or an individual who had day-to-day responsibilities to care for  
12 and financially support the deceased when the deceased was under 18 years of  
13 age.

14           (12) “Spouse” includes an individual’s domestic partner or civil union  
15 partner.

16           (7)(13) “Survivor” means a spouse, child, or parent of deceased  
17 emergency personnel.

18           (14) “Volunteer personnel” has the same meaning as in 24 V.S.A.  
19 § 2651.

1 § 3172. EMERGENCY PERSONNEL SURVIVORS BENEFIT REVIEW

2 BOARD

3 (a)(1) There is created the Emergency Personnel Survivors Benefit Review  
4 Board, which shall consist of the State Treasurer or designee, the Attorney  
5 General or designee, the Chief Fire Service Training Officer of the Vermont  
6 Fire Service Training Council or designee, ~~and one member of the public to~~  
7 ~~represent the interests of emergency personnel appointed by the Governor for a~~  
8 ~~term of two years~~ the Chair of the Law Enforcement Advisory Board or  
9 designee, and the Commissioner of Corrections or designee.

10 (2) Survivors of emergency personnel, employed by or who volunteer  
11 for the State of Vermont, a county or municipality of the State, or a nonprofit  
12 entity that provides services in the State, who die in the line of duty or of an  
13 occupation-related illness may, within 18 months after the death of the  
14 emergency personnel, request the Board award a monetary benefit under  
15 section 3173 of this ~~title~~ chapter.

16 (3) The Board shall be responsible for determining whether to award  
17 monetary benefits under section 3173 of this chapter. A decision to award  
18 monetary benefits shall be made by unanimous vote of the Board and shall be  
19 made within 60 days after the receipt of all information necessary to enable the  
20 Board to determine eligibility.

1           (4) The Board may request any information necessary for the exercise of  
2           its duties under this section. Nothing in this section shall prevent the Board  
3           from initiating the investigation or determination of a claim before being  
4           requested by a survivor or employer of emergency personnel.

5   \* \* \*

6           (d) Upon a Board decision to award a monetary benefit under this chapter,  
7           the Treasurer shall make payment to the beneficiaries as described in  
8           subsection (c) of this section. The Treasurer shall have up to one year from the  
9           date the claim is received to disburse the funds.

10   \* \* \*

11           ~~(f) The member of the public appointed by the Governor shall be entitled to~~  
12           ~~per diem compensation authorized under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for each day spent~~  
13           ~~in the performance of his or her duties. [Repealed.]~~

14         § 3173. MONETARY BENEFIT

15           (a) The survivors of emergency personnel who ~~dies~~ die while in the line of  
16           duty or from an occupation-related illness may apply for a payment of  
17           \$80,000.00 from the State.

18   \* \* \*

1 § 3175. EMERGENCY PERSONNEL SURVIVORS BENEFIT SPECIAL  
2 FUND

3 (a) The Emergency Personnel Survivors Benefit Special Fund is  
4 established in the Office of the State Treasurer for the purpose of the payment  
5 of claims distributed pursuant to this chapter. The Fund shall comprise  
6 appropriations made by the General Assembly, amounts transferred by the  
7 Emergency Board when the General Assembly is not in session, and  
8 contributions or donations from any other source. All balances in the Fund at  
9 the end of the fiscal year shall be carried forward. Interest earned shall remain  
10 in the Fund.

11 \* \* \*

12 (c) In the event that the balance of the Fund is insufficient to pay monetary  
13 benefits awarded by the Board when the General Assembly is not in session,  
14 the Emergency Board may, pursuant to its authority under 32 V.S.A. § 133,  
15 transfer into the Fund additional amounts necessary to pay the monetary  
16 benefits.

17 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

19 and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act  
20 relating to survivor benefits for law enforcement and correctional officers”

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(Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_

Representative \_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE COMMITTEE