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State: Fla.

House Sends PTSD Bill to Governor: SOUTH [2018-03-06]

The Florida House of Representatives on Monday gave final approval to a bill that would allow first responders to claim post-traumatic stress disorder as a compensable condition for workers' compensation.



Jimmy Patronis

After more than a week of impassioned pleas from first responders' families and some state officials, the Senate approved SB 376 unanimously on Saturday, and the House voted 114-0 to approve the bill on Monday.

State Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis applauded lawmakers for passing the bill.

"From day one this has been a life-or-death issue. Our firefighters are attempting suicide at a rate five times higher than the general population, and they are thinking about suicide at a rate nine times higher than the general population," he said in a press release. "We've heard horrific stories about loss of life, and the impact tragedy has on our first responders and their families."

If approved by Gov. Rick Scott as expected, the measure would take effect in October. For the first time, firefighters, police and emergency medical workers would be able to receive compensation for the psychological effects of seeing and treating victims of shootings and other violence, under certain circumstances.

Current Florida allows compensation for mental disorders such as PTSD only if the first responder has an accompanying physical injury.

When finalized, Florida will join a growing list of states that recognize PTSD as a work hazard for first responders.